

TRADITION AND ITS BOUNDARIES: A DIACHRONIC STUDY OF THE CONCEPT OF
BID'AH (RELIGIOUS INNOVATION) IN EARLY ISLAM

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TRADITION AND ITS BOUNDARIES: A DIACHRONIC STUDY OF THE CONCEPT OF
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation aims at problematizing and deconstructing the *sunnah-bid'ah* dichotomy, by reconstructing its early history. *Bid'ah* (religious innovation) in Islamic thought is conceptualized in opposition to *sunnah*, which is understood to be the tradition received from the prophet, and which is considered the most authoritative source of Muslim creed and jurisprudence after the Qur'ān. The two terms of the opposition are usually contrasted to each other with respect to the value bestowed on each, their temporal order (as *sunnah* is thought of as preceding *bid'ah*), and their sources (as *sunnah* is thought of as divinely prescribed, while *bid'ah* as following human and satanic whims). The work starts with a philological study of the term *bid'ah*, where it is argued that it originally signified the idea of uniqueness and independence and was a value-free concept. A shift in understanding the nature of this “independence” appeared in the Umayyad era, and especially in early Marwānid era. An action or judgment would be called *bid'ah* when it was perceived to be taken or conducted independently from practices set either by political authorities, as the Syrian usage would suggest, or by the Muslim community at large, as the Iraqi usage would. In both cases, a contrast with *sunnah* was established, reflecting the emergence of two conceptions of *sunnah*. Nevertheless, the element of temporality, and hence the sense of

innovation, was only introduced later during Umar II era. By introducing this new understanding of *bid'ah*, the conception of *sunnah* started gradually to be defined as the tradition received from earlier generations. A critique of this conception of *sunnah* emerged first among the Šī'ites but was soon modified and adopted by aš-Šāfi'ī. With this, the *sunnah-bid'ah* dichotomy took its final shape. Earlier texts were reread to reflect this new understanding. The dissertation shows that this reflects not only an ahistorical tendency in early 'Abbāsīd period to synthesize incommensurable conceptualizations, but also a crucial shift from an early polity centered around charismatic figures to a late Umayyad polity based on tradition to a new 'Abbāsīd polity based on the centrality of law.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter One: Introduction	1
Chapter Two: <i>Bid'ah</i> Before <i>Bid'ah</i>	11
Chapter Three: The Emergence of Technical <i>Bid'ah</i>	66
Chapter Four: The Emergence of Temporality	114
Chapter Five: The Emergence of Temporal <i>Bid'ah</i> in Jurisprudence	162
Chapter Six: Conclusion	186
Bibliography.....	194

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Bid'ah in medieval Islamic thought is understood as religious innovation. It is conceptualized in opposition to *sunnah*,¹ which is understood to be the tradition received from the prophet,² and which is considered the most authoritative source of Muslim creed and jurisprudence after the Qur'ān. While *bid'ah* can be attributed only to a specific act or creed, *sunnah* is more often used in a collective manner. Thus, we might say that a certain act is a *bid'ah*, but when using the term *sunnah* in describing an act, we might say that the act follows the *sunnah*, or that it is part of the *sunnah* (*mina s-sunnah*). This should not be confused with *sunnah* when used as a legal category that can be attributed to specific recommended acts. In that sense, the term would be in opposition to the legal category of *makrūh* (reprehensible act) rather than being in opposition to *bid'ah*.³

In that sense, each individual *bid'ah* seems to be contrasted to the whole body of *sunnah*. But then we have also the contrast between *ahlu s-sunnah* and *ahlu l-bid'ah*.⁴ The

¹ J. Robson, "*Bid'a*," in *EI*².

² This is not meant to be a definition of *sunnah*. Shortly, it will become clear that attempting at a definition is not a straightforward task.

³ G.H.A. Juynboll, "*Sunna*," in *EI*².

⁴ *Ibid.*

contrast is a conceptual one that does not follow necessarily sectarian lines.⁵ Thus, *ahlu s-sunnah* in this context is an idealized group of ideal Muslims who follow the prophetic guidance in all matters, while *ahlu l-bid'ah* comprises all Muslims deviating from this guidance. Since a *bid'ah* might refer to a specific act or creed, we often find the contrast to be between *ahlu s-sunnah* and *ahlu l-bida'* (in the plural).⁶

The *sunnah-bid'ah* dichotomy is then an important one in creating orthodoxies. But there is something else to the dichotomy. In medieval Islamic legal theory, every human act falls under one category of five (*al-aḥkām al-ḥamsah*): forbidden, reprehensible, indifferent, recommended, and obligatory.⁷ Nevertheless, not all acts or creeds fall under either *sunnah* or *bid'ah* categories.⁸ In that sense, the dichotomy is not only determining orthodoxy, but also religiosity. In other words, it sets boundaries on the domain of the religious that would set it apart from other domains of life.⁹

But it is this last observation that undermines the way the *sunnah-bid'ah* dichotomy is usually understood. It is usually assumed that within this dichotomy *sunnah* assumes a

⁵ In that sense, *ahlu s-sunnah* in this context should not be confused with *ahlu s-sunnah* when applied specifically to the Sunnī sect in Islam. The contrast between *ahlu s-sunnah* and *ahlu l-bid'ah* can be found in the literature of most sects in Islam, as it will be shown later.

⁶ G.H.A. Juynboll, “*Sunna*,” in *EI*².

⁷ J. Schacht, “*Aḥkām*,” in *EI*².

⁸ See, however, our discussion of “good” *bid'ah* below.

⁹ The theory of *al-aḥkām al-ḥamsah* blurs these boundaries by applying the “indifferent” (*mubāḥ*) category to both acts that are allowed explicitly by the lawgiver and those on which the lawgiver is silent.

role of dominance over *bid'ah*. In other words, while *sunnah* can be defined independently, *bid'ah* can only be defined in terms of *sunnah*. This dominance assumed by *sunnah* can be illustrated in the following table:

Table 1: The contrast between *sunnah* and *bid'ah*

	<i>Sunnah</i>	<i>Bid'ah</i>
Value	Positive	Negative
Timing	Past	Present
Source	Divine	Satanic/ <i>ahwā'</i> (whims)

While the prophetic *sunnah* has one source, *bid'ah* has infinite sources corresponding to each and every whim that each and every individual could have. Moreover, while *sunnah* reflects a completed past that can be represented by perfect verbs, *bid'ah* reflects an ongoing process, which hampers any final definition. The positive value of *sunnah* and the negative one for *bid'ah* could be easily interpreted in terms of presence and absence.

But since *sunnah* could be used as an uncountable noun, it follows that for *bid'ah* to be defined in terms of *sunnah*, it must be attributed to every act or creed that does not qualify as *sunnah*. In this case, the religious would encompass all human activities. Moreover, the religious values would be determined solely by *sunnah*. The concept of *bid'ah* would be dispensable and would be used merely for illustration.

Many later Muslim scholars reached such a conclusion. The fact that many adopted a scheme where any given *bid'ah* (innovation) could assume any value of the five legal values mentioned above¹⁰ shows that *bid'ah* for them is dispensable. All what is needed is a good definition of *sunnah* that could be used through processes articulated in jurisprudence.

¹⁰ J. Robson, "Bid'a," in *EI*².

The table above still works for these scholars, but only after substituting “reprehensible *bidʿah*” for *bidʿah*. Effectively, this means that a certain *bidʿah* is reprehensible not by the mere fact of being a *bidʿah*, but rather by applying to it certain principles that can be found elsewhere.

This dissertation aims at rectifying this understanding by suggesting that within the dichotomy it is *bidʿah* that assumes the role of dominance. Although it cannot be defined independently, it is the one that has the upper hand in determining the boundaries on the tradition that make it function as a binding *sunnah* and enable it to define religiosity. This suggestion is not a hypothesis that awaits historical examination. It is rather conceptual, and in that sense, it should guide our historical investigation.

State of the Field

In 1992, Nasser Al-Tuwaim submitted a dissertation in which he studies the development of the concept of *bidʿah* up to twelfth Islamic century.¹¹ While the study manages to follow the discussions on *bidʿah* as they develop in Sunnī Islam from the third century onward, the treatment of the first two centuries is very naïve. It is confined to listing some *ḥadīths* and *aṭars* and interpreting them retrospectively, without paying much attention to the historical conditions under which these were narrated. The *sunnah-bidʿah* dichotomy is taken for granted throughout, with no attempt at problematizing it.

Other than that dissertation, I am not aware of any full-scale study of the concept

¹¹ Nasser I.A. Al-Tuwaim, “The Discussion of the Concept of *Bidʿa* from Early Islam up to the Twelfth Century A.H.” (PhD Diss., University of Lancaster, 1992).

of *bid'ah*, especially as it developed in early Islam.¹² Nevertheless, *sunnah*, the counterpart of *bid'ah*, received much attention in Modern scholarship on early Islam. Since the time of Goldziher there was some skepticism with regards to the position of prophetic *sunnah* in early Islam.¹³ Joseph Schacht, in his seminal *Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence*,¹⁴ identifies three strands of *sunnah* that were running in parallel during the Umayyad era: the pre-Islamic customs of Arabia, the administrative policies in the different regions, and the “living traditions” of law schools in the *amṣār*. According to Schacht, it was only with aṣ-Ṣāfi'ī (d. 204/820) that *sunnah* came to be unified by confining it to the *sunnah* of the prophet, and, by doing so, aṣ-Ṣāfi'ī provided Islamic legal thought with a theoretical basis that came eventually to be accepted universally.¹⁵ Later scholars who challenged Schacht's theory were mainly concerned with two issues: first, the issue of authenticity as it pertains to prophetic traditions, and second, the issue of aṣ-Ṣāfi'ī's role in laying down the foundations of Islamic jurisprudence.¹⁶

¹² Maribel Fierro has written extensively on the problem of orthodoxy in religious history, especially in Muslim Spain, beginning with her dissertation on Ibn Waḍḍāḥ's book on *bida'*. Nevertheless, her work does not deal with the *sunnah-bid'ah* dichotomy itself, nor with the very early conception of *bid'ah*. She is more interested in the appropriation of the term within the specific history of Muslim Spain and Islamic West. See her study and translation of Ibn Waḍḍāḥ's book in her *Kitāb al-bida': tratado contra las innovaciones* (Madrid: Instituto de Filología, Departamento de Estudios Árabes, 1988).

¹³ See Ignaz Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, trans. C.R. Barber and S.M. Stern (London: Allen and Unwin, 1971), vol. 2.

¹⁴ Joseph Schacht, *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1950).

¹⁵ Schacht, *Origins*, 329.

¹⁶ My aim here is to only identify the debates in the field. A more detailed discussion of these debates

But the position on these two issues, and especially on the first, is just another way of making claims about the *sunnah*. By assuming a marginal role for the prophetic *sunnah* in the legal life of early Muslims, one would assume a lack of interest in narrating *ḥadīths* of legal nature, and vice versa.

But let us adopt Schacht's framework for a moment, and let us ask the question that remains unanswered within that framework: what did religiosity mean for early Muslims? Islam, the way it reached us, is a religion framed by law. The value of every human act is determined by law. Even in theology, the question is more about what creeds would be accepted by law,¹⁷ rather than being about the nature of the divine.¹⁸ Šūfis, representing

with full references will be given in chapter five.

¹⁷ While *fiqh* gradually came to be understood as the *study* of *ṣarī'ah* (law) in a more restrictive sense, the word *ṣarī'ah* itself continued to be used in a way that encompasses matters of creed as well as rituals and civil and criminal law. This understanding of the legal domain as having authority over creed was pervasive that even Muslim philosophers adopted it. Al-Fārābī, e.g., in his *Ārā' ahl al-madīnah al-fāḍilah* speaks of the opinions (or creeds) held in his constructed virtuous city in legal terms; thus some of these should be sanctioned, while others should be prohibited; see Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, *Al-Farābī on the Perfect State: Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī's Mabādī' ārā' ahl al-madīnah al-fāḍilah*, ed. and trans. Richard Walzer (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985). This is the same mindset that made Ibn Ruṣd write his *Faṣl al-maqāl* as a legal treatise that shows that philosophical practice is acceptable, if not recommended, from a legal perspective; see Abū al-Walīd ibn Ruṣd, *Faṣl al-maqāl fī taqrīr mā bayna aṣ-ṣarī'ah wa-l-ḥikmah min al-ittiṣāl*, ed. Muḥammad 'Ābid al-Ġābirī (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Waḥdah al-'Arabiyyah, 1997); cf. Leo Strauss, *Philosophy and Law: Contributions to the Understanding of Maimonides and His Predecessors*, trans. Eve Adler (New York: State University of New York Press, 1995), 81-9.

¹⁸ There are exceptions of course, but any observer would agree that speculative theology in Islam (and in Judaism) was overshadowed by law throughout much of its history; see Joseph Schacht and C.E. Bosworth, eds., *The Legacy of Islam* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), 392ff.

mainstream religious ethics, claim to be investigating the deeper significance of the law. There is no problem in any of this, for the legal tradition is understood to be discursively emanated from the *sunnah* of a prophet who is divinely inspired. But if this *sunnah* played a very little role, if any, in the legal life of early Muslims, then what was the framework of their religiosity?

By studying the development of the *sunnah-bid'ah* dichotomy, we would be investigating the boundaries of the religious, for there is no space in this dichotomy for the worldly mandate. Thus, this study would be not only a way to assess certain claims made by participants in the debates on *sunnah*, but also to answer the remaining questions on the nature of religiosity in early Islam.

Primary Sources

Besides the Qur'ān, where some derivatives of the root < *b d '* > appear, we cannot speak of primary sources for the early period of Islam. But we do have, of course, later works that aimed at preserving material that assumingly was originated in the early period. On top of our list, there are *ḥadīṭ* collections. For each *ḥadīṭ* that we used in our study, we tried our best to determine through *isnād* analysis the time and place of its circulation. No assumption is made here on the question of authenticity. Whether or not the *ḥadīṭ* that became widely circulated around, say, AH 100 is preserving material that can be traced back to the prophet is not a main concern. But we must differentiate here between two stages in the transmission of *ḥadīṭ*: the first is that when each transmission is usually triggered by circumstances, and the second is when *ḥadīṭ* became the object of study in scholarly circles. Most *ḥadīṭs* were not transmitted verbatim until the second stage. This means that the

wording of the *ḥadīṭ* that we find in our *ḥadīṭ* corpus does not reflect necessarily the wording of the prophet even if authenticity is established. While in analyzing verses from the Qurʾān our aim would be to understand these verses the way they were understood at the time of revelation, our aim when analyzing *ḥadīṭs* is to uncover the way they were understood and used at the time of their natural mood of transmission before becoming the object of scholarly study. Therefore, it becomes extremely important to determine the time and place of circulation.

Quite important for our study are *muṣannafs*, especially those of ‘Abd ar-Razzāq and Ibn Abī Šaybah.¹⁹ This is especially true in chapter four where we discuss practices that were considered *bidaʿ* by early scholars.

Less important to our study are works that aim at collecting *ḥadīṭs* and *aṭars* that pertain specifically to *bidʿah*, such as that of Ibn Waḍḍāḥ al-Qurṭubī (d. 289/901).²⁰ I say less important because they rarely contain material that cannot be found in other works. Of course, studying the structures of these books would be extremely important in understanding later developments beyond the timeframe of this dissertation.

Later theoretical works on *bidʿah*, such as that of aš-Šāṭibī (d. 790/1388),²¹ are also used but not in a systematic manner. They are searched mainly for material attributed to

¹⁹ ‘Abd ar-Razzāq b. Hammām aš-Šanʿānī, *al-Muṣannaf*, 2nd ed., ed. Ḥabīb ar-Raḥmān al-Aʿzamī (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1983); Abū Bakr ibn Abī Šaybah, *al-Muṣannaf*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAwwāmah (Jeddah: Dār al-Qiblah, and Damascus: Muʿassasat ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān, 2006).

²⁰ Muḥammad ibn Waḍḍāḥ al-Qurṭubī, *Al-Bidaʿ wa-n-nahy ʿan-hā*, ed. ʿAmr ʿAbd al-Munʿim Salīm (Cairo: Maktabat Ibn Taymiyyah, AH 1416).

²¹ Abū Ishāq aš-Šāṭibī, *al-Iʿtiṣām*, ed. Muḥammad b. ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān aš-Šuqayr, Saʿd b. ʿAbd Allāh Āl

early scholars. Occasionally, however, some interpretations of certain *ḥadīṭs* and *aṭars* are discussed. The same applies to discussions of *bidʿah* that can be found in Qurʾānic exegesis, *ḥadīṭ* commentaries, and works of jurisprudence.

Denying predestination was probably the first theological doctrine that was deemed *bidʿah* by certain circles. This makes the early theological letters and epistles, especially those attributed to ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz (d. 101/720) and to al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728), of special importance.²²

Modern Arabic studies do not add much to the discussions found in aṣ-Ṣāṭibī's *Iʿtiṣām*. An exception to that is Muḥammad ʿAbd Allāh Darrāz's *Mizān*,²³ where the author aims at refining the criteria of *bidʿah* in a quite solid way from an *uṣūlī* perspective. Nevertheless, the work adds very little to our understanding of the early developments of the concept of *bidʿah*.

Chapters of the Study

The next chapter is a philological study of the term *bidʿah*. The aim is to problematize the *sunnah-bidʿah* opposition by showing that there is little in the original sense of *bidʿah* that would facilitate this opposition. Included in this chapter is the study of the Qurʾānic verses that contain derivatives of the root < b d ʿ >.

Ḥumayd, and Hiṣām b. Ismāʿīl aṣ-Ṣīnī (Riyadh: Dār Ibn al-Ġawzī, 2008).

²² See pp. 149ff. for a full discussion of these letters and their significance.

²³ Muḥammad ʿAbd Allāh Darrāz, *al-Mizān bayna as-sunnah wa-l-bidʿah*, ed. Aḥmad Muṣṭafā Fāḍliyyah (Cairo: Dār al-Qalam, 2003).

By problematizing the opposition, I show that it is not self-evident, but rather it is an opposition that was created in history to facilitate the definition of the otherwise undetermined concept of *sunnah*. I aim in the rest of the dissertation at reconstructing this history of the opposition, by paying attention to the three elements of contrast as illustrated in the table above:²⁴ the value, the timing, and the source.

My aim in chapter three is to historicize the emergence of the dichotomy by determining the historical conditions under which the term *bid'ah* started to gain a negative value. Furthermore, I aim at showing that these conditions vary from one region to another resulting in two different conceptions of the dichotomy: one that was dominant in Iraq, and one that was dominant in Syria.

While the dichotomy at that stage was established by assigning different values to its two terms, the temporal element was still lacking. In chapter four, I account for the emergence of this temporal element in law and theology. From now on, *bid'ah* started to be understood as innovation.

In chapter five, I aim at studying the way *bid'ah* came to be contrasted to the *sunnah* of the prophet exclusively. Furthermore, I show how by completing the contrast between *sunnah* and *bid'ah*, the door was opened for theoretical jurisprudence, and by that *bid'ah* became dispensable.

In chapter six, I provide a summary of the main conclusions, and offer an interpretation of them that would shed some light on the nature of Islamic polity up to year 232/847.

²⁴ See p. 3 above.

CHAPTER TWO

BID'AH BEFORE BID'AH

The main premise upon which this thesis is built is that the *sunnah-bid'ah* opposition is a constructed one. By that I mean that it is not self-evident, but rather it is an opposition that was created in history to facilitate the definition of the otherwise undetermined concept of *sunnah*.

In this chapter, I will deal with this premise from two different angles in two sections. In the first, I will deal with the term *bid'ah* philologically to establish that there is nothing inherent¹ in the term that would make it lend itself manifestly to be contrasted with *sunnah* without a conscious interference. In the second section, I will deal with some early instances of using the term *bid'ah* in religious discourse where medieval scholars

¹ Many modern linguists, especially after Ferdinand de Saussure's *Cours de linguistique générale* (*Course in general linguistics*, translated and annotated by Roy Harris (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013)), are quite skeptical when it comes to using such terms as “inherent” or “original” when speaking of words and their significations. Words are perceived as being always in a flux of change. I do subscribe to such a notion; nevertheless, I understand it in a less dogmatic manner. Through the history of a word, its correspondence to its meaning is continuously fine-tuned through usage. But at a certain point the word reaches a level of maturity that its meaning becomes the more dominant side of the correspondence, and the semantic level comes to dominate the pragmatic one. The inherent meaning, as used here, is that meaning that has been reached in this process, and that comes to dominate future usages and fixations. In that sense, it is inherent only with respect to the future of the word not to its history. Arguing for such an understanding of the work of language is beyond the scope of this dissertation but understanding what is meant by “inherent” and similar terms in this chapter is essential. In a similar fashion, I will, following medieval Muslim scholars, use the contrast between a “linguistic” usage and a “technical” one throughout this chapter. As long as the reader bears in mind that both usages are in fact linguistic, there is no harm in using this contrast in the manner used here.

understood the term in the more technical sense of religious innovation, but still without the implication of an established contrast.

I. A Philological Study of the Term

For our premise to be true, it requires that the term *bid'ah* did not carry in its early usage, i.e. before acquiring its theological and legal significations, what would make the contrast possible without a semantic shift that would change its sense in an essential way.

One might ask: But isn't this the case with most Islamic terms? Didn't Abū Ḥātim ar-Rāzī (d. 322/933-4) write his *Zīnah* specifically to discuss these terms and their etymologies?² This is true, but the situation here is different. The verbal noun *ḥaḡḡ* might have signified originally the idea of betaking oneself towards a certain place, and then it acquired its Islamic or pre-Islamic technical sense of performing the specific pilgrimage to Mecca with all its rituals, but the semantic change that is involved in such a process can be considered a sort of narrowing down the "original" sense. The *ḥaḡḡ* now is still considered *ḥaḡḡ* in the "original" sense. In a way, what facilitated this utilization of the term for these specific rituals is something that the term itself was carrying all the way. What I am claiming here is that when it comes to *bid'ah*, this is not the case. The main feature that allowed the

² One can speak also of *Tafsīr asmā' Allāh* by az-Zaḡḡāḡ (d. 311/923) and *Istiqāq* by az-Zaḡḡāḡī (d. 337-40/948-50), in which both authors attempted at providing accounts of the linguistic derivation of the Divine Names; see Abū Ishāq az-Zaḡḡāḡ, *Tafsīr asmā' Allāh al-ḥusnā*, 5th ed., ed. Aḥmad Yūsuf ad-Daqqāq (Damascus and Beirut: Dār al-Ma'mūn, 1986); and Abū al-Qāsim az-Zaḡḡāḡī, *Istiqāq asmā' Allāh*, 2nd ed., ed. 'Abd al-Ḥusayn al-Mubārak (Beirut: Mu'assasat ar-Risālah, 1986).

term *bid'ah* to be contrasted with *sunnah* is missing in its earlier linguistic usage, and the term had to pass through a complete refurbishment before the contrast could be established.

Nevertheless, medieval Arabic dictionaries make sure to leave their readers with the impression of a smooth transition from the linguistic usage to the technical one. Most would tell us that *bid'ah* stands linguistically for anything that is invented or produced “not after the similitude of anything pre-existing”³ (*lā ‘an sābiqi miṭāl*).⁴ If this definition really reflects the early usage of the word, then *bid'ah* is indeed similar to *ḥağğ*, and the semantic shift is achieved through a mere narrowing down of the linguistic sense. But this understanding of the linguistic *bid'ah* rests upon a certain perception of the root *bd'* as inherently carrying two senses: the sense of creation, and the sense of being without precedent. Indeed, it is these senses that were needed to establish and maintain the contrast with *sunnah*. I will argue here that the root *bd'* originally conveyed neither senses; rather, it belonged to the semantic field of uniqueness. As for the given definition of *bid'ah*, I will argue that it was established retroactively.

Dictionaries state six verbal forms derived from the root *bd'*. These are forms I, II, IV, V, VIII, and X. Nevertheless, it seems that two forms of them (II, and V) were used only in reference to the technical *bid'ah*. Thus, *badda'a* means to charge (someone) or accuse (him or her) with performing or holding a *bid'ah* in its technical sense. Similarly, *tabadda'a*

³ Edward William Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, completed by Stanley Lane-Poole (London: Williams and Norgate, 1863-93), s. v., “*bd'*”. Lane’s *Lexicon* is considered here among medieval Arabic dictionaries since its material is based on translations from them.

⁴ Aḥmad ibn Fāris, *Mu'ğam maqāyis al-luğah*, ed. ‘Abd as-Salām Hārūn (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1979), s. v., “*bd'*”. Similar expressions are found in most medieval dictionaries.

means to turn or become a man of *bid'ah* (also in the technical sense).⁵ We are left then with four forms only.

Let us start with form I. Dictionaries give us the following words that belong to form I or are derived from it: *bada'a* (a transitive verb), *badu'a* (an intransitive verb), *bid'* (an adjective or epithet), *badī'* (an active participle or an adjective; see discussion below), *badā'ah* and *budū'* (verbal nouns), and *bid'ah*.⁶

Nevertheless, there is no attestation of the use of the transitive verb *bada'a* neither in pre-Islamic nor in Islamic material.⁷ In a way, we can say it is an assumed verb. The philologists could have been satisfied with the existence of the intransitive verb *badu'a* which could easily form the basis of the whole paradigm. In my opinion, however, assuming *bada'a* was necessary to account for the word *badī'* used in the Qur'ān twice, and attributed to God in both instances.⁸

⁵ Lane, *Lexicon*, s. v., “*bd*”. The verb *tabadda'a*, however, seems to be quite rare. Lane provides a line of poetry by Ru'bah b. al-'Ağğāğ (d. 145/762) that can be found also in *Mağmū' aš'ār al-'arab wa-huwa muštamil 'alā dīwān Ru'ba b. al-'Ağğāğ*, ed. W. Ahlwardt (Berlin: Reuther & Reichard, 1903), §33, line 8, and that is cited also in Ġamāl ad-Dīn ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'Arab*, ed. 'Abd Allāh 'Alī al-Kabīr, Muḥammad Aḥmad Ḥasab Allāh, and Hāšim Muḥammad aš-Šādīlī (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1981), s. v., “*bd*”. After exhaustive search (see n. 7, p. 14 below), I was not able to find any other attestation of this usage.

⁶ I skipped the plural forms of some of these words. For a full treatment, see Lane, *Lexicon*, s. v., “*bd*”.

⁷ This claim is supported by exhaustive search using *al-Maktabah aš-šāmilah* database (version 3.64), after adding manually Ibādī, Zaydī, and Twelver versions, and collections of poetry and literature that are missing in the downloaded version but can be found at <http://shamela.ws/rep.php>.

⁸ Qur'ān 2:117, 6:101.

The word *badīʿ* is of the pattern *faʿīl* which is usually reserved for adjectives. If *badīʿ* is used as an adjective, then the most natural thing is to say that it is derived from the intransitive verb *baduʿa*, which follows the pattern *faʿūla*, used usually to signify the idea of acquiring a certain trait or attribute. It is not uncommon, however, for *faʿīl* to signify an active participle or passive participle or even a verbal noun. But even if *badīʿ* in the Qurʾānic verses is an active participle, the most common thing for it is to be derived from *baduʿa* and not *badaʿa*. Ibn as-Sarrāġ (d. 316/929), the great grammarian, goes even further to claim that Arabic does not accept having *faʿīl* as an active participle except if it is derived from an intransitive verb.⁹ Therefore, it seems quite strange to see the philologists insisting that *badīʿ* in the Qurʾānic verses is an active participle, and that it is derived from the (assumed) transitive verb *badaʿa*.

I will try here to sketch the way I assume the philologists were thinking. First, the philologists understood the word *badīʿ* in non-Qurʾānic contexts to mean new or without precedent. They derived it rightly from *baduʿa*. But if this is the meaning of *badīʿ*, then the Qurʾānic *badīʿ* must have a different derivation, for God cannot be described as new. They then must have looked at the contexts of the two Qurʾānic verses. The first reads:

⁹ Abū Bakr ibn as-Sarrāġ, *al-Uṣūl fī an-naḥw*, ed. ʿAbd al-Ḥusayn al-Fatī (Beirut: Muʾassasat ar-Risālah, 1985), 1:124. Some other grammarians stated some few exceptions; see, e.g., Ġalāl ad-Dīn as-Suyūṭī, *Hamʿ al-hawāmīʿ fī šarḥ “Ġamʿ al-ġawāmīʿ,”* ed. ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd al-Hindāwī (Cairo: al-Maktabah at-Tawfiqiyyah, 2000), 6:57.

They say: “God has fathered a child.” Glory be to Him! To Him, rather, belongs all that is in the heavens and on earth. All mankind obeys Him. *Badīʿ* of the heavens and the earth! When He decrees a matter, He merely says to it: “Be!” and it is.¹⁰

The second reads:

Badīʿ of the heavens and the earth! How can He have a son when He has no spouse and created all things? He is Omniscient.¹¹

Both verses speak of creation *ex nihilo*. The philologists must have observed that the verb *abdaʿa* of the fourth form involves the idea of creation. They know, of course, that in Arabic it is not uncommon for the first and fourth forms to share the same meaning, although it is more common for the fourth form to be a causative version of the first form. Given all of this, the philologists, I believe, assumed that *badīʿ* in the two verses must be the active participle of the (assumed) verb *badaʿa* which shares the meaning of *abdaʿa* (i.e., to create). Thus, *badīʿ*, in this verse, came to be understood as the Creator.

There are several indicators that support this sketch of the way the philologists came to the above conclusion, but I will choose only two. The first is the statement of al-Azhari (d. 370/980):

¹⁰ “*Wa-qālu ttaḥaḍa r-Raḥmānu waladan subḥānahū bal laḥū mā fi s-samāwāti wa-l-arḍi kullun laḥū qānitūna badīʿu s-samāwāti wa-l-arḍi wa-idā qaḍā amran fa-innamā yaqūlu laḥū kun fayakūn;*” Qurʾān 2:116-7. I am using Tarif Khalidi’s translation (New York: Penguin Books, 2009) here and throughout the dissertation; however, I kept *badīʿ* untranslated for the sake of argument.

¹¹ “*Badīʿu s-samāwāti wa-l-arḍi annā yakūnu laḥū waladun wa-lam takun laḥū šāḥibatun wa-ḥalaqa kulla šayʿin wa-huwa bi-kulli šayʿin ʿalim;*” Qurʾān 6:101. As in the previous verse, I kept *badīʿ* untranslated for the sake of argument.

Badīʿ is derived from *badaʿa* and not from *abdaʿa*. *Abdaʿa*, however, is more common in the speech than *badaʿa*. If *badaʿa* is used, it would not be a mistake. Thus, *badīʿ* is [on the pattern of] *faʿīl*, which [in reality] means *fāʿil* [i.e., it is an active participle].¹²

Here, al-Azharī is aware of the obscurity of the verb *badaʿa*. When he mentions that “it would not be a mistake” to use *badaʿa*, he is in fact raising more question marks over the term, rather than dismissing doubts. Al-Azharī’s statement seems to be saying implicitly that the verb *badaʿa* is formed through a back-formation process. The reason to why this verb should be admitted to the language is the very fact that we have the word *badīʿ*.

The second indicator is what we find in al-Ḥalīl’s *ʿAyn*. Al-Ḥalīl (d. ca. 170/786) makes the following comment on *badīʿ* in our Qurʾānic verses:

It has been read “*badīʿ (a)* of the heavens and the earth” in the accusative, expressing wonder of what the polytheists were saying.¹³

In this reading, *badīʿ* in the verse is not a divine name or attribute anymore. It is rather an adverb denouncing what the polytheists were saying in the previous verse. Al-Ḥalīl does not specify the reciter, and this reading does not appear in the major works on variations.

¹² “*Badīʿun min badaʿa lā min abdaʿa wa-abdaʿa akṭaru fi l-kalāmi min badaʿa wa-lawi stuʿmila badaʿa lam yakun ḥaṭaʿan fa-badīʿun faʿīlun bi-maʿnā fāʿil;*” Abū Maṣṣūr al-Azharī, *Tahḍīb al-luġah*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAwaḍ Marʿab, ʿUmar Salāmī, ʿAbd al-Karīm Ḥāmid, and Fāṭimah Muḥammad Aṣlān (Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ at-Turāṭ al-ʿArabī, 2001), s. v., “*bdʿ*”.

¹³ “*Wa-yuqraʿu badīʿa s-samāwāti wa-l-arḍi bi-n-naṣbi ʿalā ġihati t-taʿaġġubi li-mā qāla l-mušrikūn;*” al-Ḥalīl b. Aḥmad al-Farāhidī, *K. al-ʿAyn*, 2nd ed., ed. Maḥdī al-Maḥzūmī and Ibrāhīm as-Sāmarraʾī (Beirut: Dār wa-Maktabat al-Hilāl, 1986), s. v., “*bdʿ*”.

It does appear, however, in az-Zamahšarī's *Kaššāf* attributed to a certain al-Manṣūr,¹⁴ and it seems that later Qur'ān commentators took it from az-Zamahšarī (d. 538/1144).¹⁵ The fact that this reading is not mentioned in major books on variations, but exclusively in a lexicon and in a linguistic commentary and in works quoting these two, suggests that it was proposed by some linguist or philologist who was aware of the public reading but was not satisfied with it. Thus, he understood *badī'* as being derived from *badu'a* and not *bada'a*. To solve the problem of attributing the idea of newness to God, he changed the case ending of the word so that it would not refer to Him.

All of this suggest that there is a real problem in deriving *badī'* from *bada'a*, and that the verb *bada'a* is a later construction. What I suggest is that the Qur'ānic *badī'* is derived from *badu'a* in a similar fashion to the way the non-Qur'ānic *badī'* is. The source of confusion lies in the assumption that the latter means being new or without precedent. But if we start understanding the word *badī'* to mean being unique (or something of that sort), and the root *bd'* to belong to the semantic field of uniqueness, the confusion would be removed. The first form would then be resting on the intransitive verb *badu'a* which would mean acquiring the trait of uniqueness. In what follows I will give eight arguments for such an understanding.

¹⁴ Ġār Allāh az-Zamahšarī, *al-Kaššāf 'an ḥaqā'iq ḡawāmiḍ at-tanzīl*, 3rd ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1986), 1:182. Nevertheless, az-Zamahšarī's understanding of this reading is quite different from al-Ḥalīl's, for *badī'* remains in az-Zamahšarī's understanding a Divine Attribute, even when it is in the accusative.

¹⁵ See, e.g., Abū Ḥayyān Muḥammad al-Andalusī, *al-Baḥr al-muḥīṭ fī at-tafsīr*, ed. Ṣidqī Muḥammad Ġamīl (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1992), 1:583.

(1) The first argument is that some scholars, even when adopting the common understanding of *badīʿ* in the two verses, qualified the meaning by introducing the notion of uniqueness. Az-Zaġġāġ (d. 311/923), for example, gives the following meaning for *Badīʿ* being one of the Divine Names: “He is the sole (*munfarid*) creator of heavens and earth.”¹⁶ Similarly, ar-Rabīʿ b. Anas (d. 139/756-7), according to aṭ-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923), offers the following understanding: “[The verse means that] no one else but God participated in the creation of [heavens and earth].”¹⁷

(2) The second argument is that in all places where we find the word *badīʿ* understood by the philologists to mean being new, it will equally work to replace it with *farīd* (unique).

(3) The third argument is a stronger version of the second. It is that in some cases understanding *badīʿ* to be synonymous to *farīd* is more suitable to the context. For example, Ibn al-Aṭīr (d. 606/1210) mentions the following *ḥadīṭ*:

Tihāmāh [i.e. the area in Western Arabia] is like the *badīʿ* of honey; it is sweet in the beginning, and [remains] sweet till the end.¹⁸

¹⁶ “... *annahu l-munfaridu bi-ḥalqi s-samāwāti wa-l-arḍi*,” az-Zaġġāġ, *Tafsīr asmāʾ Allāh*, 64. As a matter of fact, az-Zaġġāġ’s understanding of the root is not far from our understanding. Nevertheless, he understood *badīʿ* in the verses to be derived from the fourth form and not from the first, and hence he understood it to involve the idea of creation. Thus, among the two elements in his definition, it is only the element of soleness that belongs to the root itself, while the element of creation belongs to the form.

¹⁷ “*Wa-lam yaṣrakhu fī ḥalqihā aḥad*,” Abū Ġaʿfar Muḥammad b. Ġarīr aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr aṭ-Ṭabarī: Ġāmiʿ al-bayān ʿan taʾwīl āy al-Qurʾān*, ed. ʿAbd Allāh at-Turkī (Riyadh: Dār ʿĀlam al-Kutub, 2003), 2:465.

¹⁸ “... *anna Tihāmata ka-badīʿi l-ʿasali ḥulwun awwaluhū ḥulwun āḥiruh*,” Maġd ad-Dīn Abū as-Saʿādāt ibn al-Aṭīr, *an-Nihāyah fī ġarīb al-ḥadīṭ wa-l-aṭar*, ed. Ṭāhir Aḥmad az-Zāwī and Maḥmūd Muḥammad aṭ-Ṭanāḥī (Cairo: ʿĪsā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1963-6), s. v., “*bdʿ*”; quoted also in Ibn Manẓūr’s *Lisān* (s. v., “*bdʿ*”).

Ibn al-Aṭīr comments:

The *badīʿ* here means the new skin [as receptacle]. [The prophet here] is likening Tihāmāh to it because of its good air that does not go bad, in a similar fashion to the honey that does not go bad also.¹⁹

The whole resemblance is based on the fact that honey, unlike milk as Ibn Manẓūr (d. 711/1311-2) commented,²⁰ does not go bad. Understanding *badīʿ* to mean a new skin renders the whole resemblance senseless. The resemblance works much better if the *ḥadīth* is understood as saying, “the uniqueness of Tihāmāh among regions is similar to the uniqueness of a skin of honey among foods.” It is this uniqueness that the *ḥadīth* is addressing; the uniqueness that is based on the common belief that honey is the only food that does not rot.

(4) Similarly, even in the two Qur’ānic verses where *badīʿ* is understood to mean a creator, our understanding seems to be more desirable, not only from a morphological perspective, but also from a semantic one. It is true that the two verses speak of creation *ex nihilo*. Nevertheless, the creation issue is brought into the discourse in response to claims made by Christians, in the first verse, and by polytheists, in the second, with regards to God’s progeny. In the common understanding, the line of argument goes as follows: God does not have a son, for He is the creator of heavens and earth. He creates by His Words.

This *ḥadīth* is not found in major collections. Nevertheless, authentication here is irrelevant, since it is used mainly as a linguistic evidence.

¹⁹ “*Al-badīʿu z-ziqqu l-ḡadidu šabbaha bihi Tihāmata li-ṭibi hawā’ihā wa-annahū lā yataḡayyaru ka-mā anna l-ʿasala lā yataḡayyar;*” Ibn al-Aṭīr, *Nihāyah*, s. v., “*bdʿ*.”

²⁰ Ibn Manẓūr’s *Lisān*, s. v., “*bdʿ*.”

If we adopt the proposed understanding, the Qur'ānic argument would be: God does not have a son, for He is alone and self-sustained Who does not need anyone else in heavens and earth. When He wants something, He creates it by His Words. The second understanding, in my opinion, is more desirable for it makes the link between the claims to be refuted and God's method of creation smoother.

(5) The fifth argument is that our understanding of the root *bd'* is more adequate in accounting for *bid'*. The most elaborate example of using *bid'* is the one found in the Qur'ān:

Say: "I am not a *bid'* among messengers. I know not what is to be done to me or you. I merely follow what is revealed to me. I am nothing but a manifest warner."²¹

According to philologists, *bid'* means being new also. If we accept this, then, judging from the verse, it seems not to differ from *badī'* except in tone. *Bid'* here can be understood as being new in the sense that being new is something bad; while *badī'* can be understood as being new when newness is something desirable. When we examine the contexts in which *bid'* appears, it seems, however, that understanding it to mean being weird or strange or extraordinary (i.e., in the line of uniqueness) is more fitting. The verse stresses the similarity between Muḥammad and the other prophets, and not the fact that he was preceded by them. Understanding *bid'* to mean being weird or outlandish is preferable here,

²¹ "Qul mā kuntu *bid'an* minā r-rusulī wa-mā adrī mā yuḥḍalu bī wa-lā bikum in attabī'u illā mā yuḥḍa ilayya wa-mā ana illā naḍīrun mubīn;" Qur'ān, 46:9. I modified Khalidi's translation by keeping the word *bid'* untranslated.

and still preserves the tone difference between *badīʿ* and *bidʿ*. This is, however, a tentative understanding that we will have to revisit later in this chapter.²²

(6) The sixth argument is that our understanding of the root *bdʿ* allows us to account for a certain usage of some words derived from it of which the common understanding is incapable. By that I am referring to the expression *abdaʿati n-nāqah* and its alike, which amounts to saying that the she-camel became fatigued or broken down.²³ This usage seems at odd with the other usages of words derived from *bdʿ*. Unable to find a common ground between them, Ibn Fāris (d. 395/1004), who is famous for grouping the senses of roots in clusters, suggests having two different roots (*aṣlān*) sharing the letters *b*, *d*, and *ʿ* in this order.²⁴ In my opinion, however, what we have here is one root only. In most attestations of this expression, there is an added prepositional phrase. For example, we have *abdaʿat bī nāqatī*, which amounts to saying that the she-camel became fatigued or broken down and *left me behind*.²⁵ It seems that this element, that is leaving someone behind, is the basis for this usage. What supports this is that in many attestations we have the verb in the passive form. For example, it is more common to find *ubdiʿa bī*, which means I was left behind, than *abdaʿat bī nāqatī*. The verb *abdaʿa* is of the fourth form which is usually the causative version of the first form. If *baduʿa* means becoming unique or strange or alone as

²² See p. 26 below.

²³ Lane, *Lexicon*, s. v., “*bdʿ*.”

²⁴ Ibn Fāris, *Maqāyīs*, s. v., “*bdʿ*.”

²⁵ Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān*, s. v., “*bdʿ*.”

I am suggesting, then *abda'a* means causing something to be unique or strange or alone. Thus, the usage we are discussing here fits well into this framework. It is worthwhile here to mention a verse in which this usage is attested. Al-Afwah al-Awdī, the pre-Islamic poet, said:

For every seeker, there is a *sunnah* [passing] from those who passed away; it advances him [sometimes] in his endeavor, [while in some other times,] it *tubdi'u*.²⁶

It is clear that *abda'a* here means to set someone back; hence it is related to the idea of leaving someone behind. In a way, this seems to be the best place to look for a temporal sense of the word. But what is interesting in this verse is that it has the verb *abda'a* attributed to the *sunnah* passing from previous generations. In addition to the absence of contrast between the two terms, there is also the absence of the element of newness from the verb *abda'a*.

(7) One of the senses of the verb *badu'a* that is mentioned by philologists is becoming superlative in one's kind²⁷ (*iḏā kāna ḡāyatan fī kulli šay'*).²⁸ We can see how this idea is related to that of being new: being new implies being first, and being first can be interpreted to mean being superlative. Nevertheless, it is clear that our understanding of *badu'a* can encompass this sense without the need for further processing.

²⁶ “*Wa-li-kulli sā'in sunnatun mimman maḏā / tanmī bihī fī sa'yihī aw tubdi'ū*,” al-Afwah al-Awdī, *Dīwān al-Afwah al-Awdī*, ed. Muḥammad at-Tūnḡī (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1998), §17, line 7; and quoted also in 'Alī b. Ismā'īl ibn Sīdah, *al-Muḥkam wa-l-muḥīṭ al-a'ḏam*, ed. 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Hindāwī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2000), s. v., “*bd'*”.

²⁷ Lane, *Lexicon*, s. v., “*bd'*.” Note that Lane considers this sense to be the main sense of the word.

²⁸ Al-Kisā'ī as quoted in al-Azhari, *Tahḏīb*, s. v., “*bd'*.”

(8) The eighth argument is one based on examining the roots that share the same three letters of *bdʿ* but in different order,²⁹ in addition to the bilateral root *bd* which has the first two letters of *bdʿ*.³⁰ Thus, in addition to *bdʿ*, we are interested here in the following possible combinations: *bd*, *bʿd*, *ʿbd*, *db*, *dʿb*, and *dbʿ*. The two elements in the common understanding of *bdʿ*, the elements of newness and creation, are completely absent in all attestations of these six roots. Uniqueness, on the other hand, seems to be present in several of them. Let us start with *bd*, or with *bdd* as traditional grammar would put it. Among the main senses of the root and of words derived from it are those of separating or disuniting. We have also the senses of division (into lots or portions for example) and distribution. The tenth form signifies the idea of independence and exclusivity.³¹ Similarly we find in Hebrew the senses of partition, separation, being alone, and solitary.³² All of this suggests an affinity with the idea of uniqueness. The affinity is less clear with the root *bʿd*, the main signification of which is farness and remoteness, but still can be argued for. The root *ʿbd* signifies worshipping, slavery, and serving. Again, the affinity is remote, and can be weakly

²⁹ It has been noted for a long time that in Arabic and Semitic languages the different combinations of the same letters might in many cases share a core sense; see ‘Abd Allāh al-‘Alāyilī, *Muqaddimah li-dars luḡat al-‘arab wa-kayfa naḍa’u al-mu‘ḡam al-ḡadīd* (Cairo: al-Maṭba‘ah al-‘Aṣriyyah, n.d.), 203-210.

³⁰ See al-‘Alāyilī, *Muqaddima*, 200-203, for a compelling argument of the relationship of the trilateral roots to the bilateral ones.

³¹ Lane, *Lexicon*, s. v., “*bd*.” Lane is used throughout this paragraph in determining significations of Arabic root, and references are to the respected roots.

³² David J. A. Clines, ed., *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993-2016), s. v., “*bd*” and “*bdd*.”

established through recognizing that slavery involves the idea of exclusive ownership and possession. The root $\text{'}db$ is not found in Arabic. Nevertheless, it is used in Aramaic to signify allotment,³³ displaying thus a strong affinity with uniqueness. The root $d'b$ seems quite remote, while the root db' is not found in Arabic.

These arguments, taken together, make a strong case for linking the root bd' to the semantic field of uniqueness, and for setting the ideas of creation and newness aside. Based on that we can now draw the following table of the words derived from the root bd' and their significations and the part of speech for each:

³³ *The Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon*, s. v., “ db ,” accessed April 2, 2017, <http://cal1.cn.huc.edu/>.

Table 2: Words derived from < b d ' > and their significations

Form	Word	PS	Main Signification
I	<i>badu'a</i>	vi.	to be or become unique or strange; to be alone or independent
I	<i>badā'ah</i>	n.	verbal noun of <i>badu'a</i>
I	<i>budū'</i>	n.	verbal noun of <i>badu'a</i>
I	<i>bid'</i>	adj.	1. (as a description of a person): weird, strange, outlandish, unique 2. (as a description of a thing or an act): done by someone independently
I	<i>badī'</i>	adj.	(both as a description of a person or a thing): unique, marvelous
I	<i>badī'ah</i>	adj.	fem. of <i>badī'</i>
I	<i>bid'ah</i>	adj.	fem. of <i>bid'</i>
I	<i>bid'ah</i>	n.	a unique act, an act that is done independently, an opinion that is chosen independently
IV	<i>abda'a(hū)</i>	vt.	to cause something unique to happen (and thus to create a unique thing)
IV	<i>abda'a (bi-h)</i>	ph.v.	to leave (someone) behind
VIII	<i>ibtada'a(hū)</i>	vt.	to independently act upon (something), to choose (something) independently
X	<i>istabda'a(hū)</i>	vt.	to consider (something) to be unique and marvelous

Note that I did not mention here the standard verbal nouns and participles of forms IV, VIII, and X. I did not include also forms II and V, which are related to the technical sense of *bid'ah* exclusively.³⁴

The word *bid'ah* as an adjective is the feminine form of *bid'*. As a noun, it is an act described as such. It is important then, for our understanding of *bid'ah*, to revisit our

³⁴ See p. 13 above.

differentiation between *bidʿ* and *badīʿ* that was suggested earlier.³⁵ The difference in tone that is suggested by the Qurʾānic verse is not without a contest. Although it is more common for *badīʿ* to carry a positive tone, I was able to find a few attestations from pre-Islamic poetry where it is used in a similar fashion to the way *bidʿ* is used in the Qurʾānic verse. In the *Ḥamāsah* of Abū Tammām (d. 231-2/845-6), for example, we find the following verse attributed to a woman of the *banū Maḥzūm*:

If you ask, [I will answer by saying that] glory has settled, with nothing being *badīʿ* in this,
in the tribes of Taym and Maḥzūm.³⁶

Similarly, I was able to find a few attestations of *bidʿ* carrying positive tones. Probably the clearest among these is the following verse attributed to the pre-Islamic or early Islamic Bašāmah b. al-Ġadīr:

Carry this message to the sons of Sahm at your place, “Is there among you a person who is
a *bidʿ* in [facing] the misfortunes of time.”³⁷

³⁵ See p. 21 above.

³⁶ “*In tasʿalī fa-l-maḡdu ḡayra l-badīʿ qad ḥalla fī Taymin wa-Maḥzūmī*,” Abū Tammām Ḥabīb b. Aws aṭ-Ṭāʿī, *Dīwān al-ḥamāsah*, in *Šarḥ “Dīwān al-ḥamāsah,”* by Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Al-Marzūqī, ed. Aḥmad Amīn and ʿAbd as-Salām Hārūn (Cairo: Laḡnat at-Taʿlīf wa-t-Tarḡamah wa-n-Našr, 1951-3), §813, line 1. The editors mistakenly read *ḡayru* rather than *ḡayra*; my reading, however, is supported by the commentary of al-Marzūqī (d. 421/1030). Since the poetess is unidentified, it is difficult to determine the time of the poem. Nevertheless, the fact that the poem contains several metrical “mistakes” might suggest an early date.

³⁷ “*Abliḡ banī Sahmin laday-ka fa-hal fī-kun minā l-ḥadaṭāni min biḏʿi*,” Abū al-ʿAbbās al-Mufaḍḍal aḏ-Ḍabbī, *Dīwān al-mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, commentated upon by al-Qāsim ibn al-Anbārī, edited and translated by C. J. Lyall (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1918-1921), §122, line 13. The translation is mine, as Lyall’s translation of this verse is not satisfactory for our purposes.

It is not out of order to read al-Kisāʾī (d. 189/805), for example, reportedly saying, “*bidʿ* is [used] in good and bad.”³⁸

Nevertheless, we can still find some discrepancies between the terms. In describing persons, they seem to be synonymous. In describing things or acts, however, they seem to differ. *Bidʿ* seems to describe acts or things that are objects of the verb *ibtadaʿa* of form VIII; while *badīʿ* seems to describe those that are objects of the verb *abdʿa* of form IV. It is crucial then to note the difference between forms IV and VIII. While the element of uniqueness is signified by both, it pertains mainly to the object in form IV, and to the subject in form VIII. This differentiation, while not mentioned in the dictionaries, is based on the fact that form IV is usually causative, while form VIII is reflexive.³⁹ If these claims are substantiated, it follows that *bidʿ*, when referring to an act or a thing, is telling us that the actor did the action or made the thing independently. On the other hand, when *badīʿ* is used to refer to an act or a thing, it signifies that the act or the thing itself is unique.

The conclusion of this section then is that the linguistic *bidʿah*, as a noun, lacks the element of newness, which is the essential element observed in the later established contrast with *sunnah*. Rather, *bidʿah* is an act that is done by an *independent* actor. An act cannot be classified as a *bidʿah* by itself irrespective of its actor. Nevertheless, this definition rests on two premises: that *bidʿ* and *badīʿ* are describing objects of verbs from forms VIII and IV respectively, and that forms VIII and IV are to be differentiated in the manner described

³⁸ “*Al-bidʿu fi l-ḥayri wa-š-šarr;*” quoted in al-Azhari, *Tahḍīb*, s. v., “*bdʿ*.”

³⁹ W. Wright, ed. and trans., *Arabic Grammar*, 3rd ed., translated from the German of Caspari, revised by W. Robertson Smith and M. J. De Goeje (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1896-8), 1:34, 42.

above. Substantiating these two claims will have to wait till the next chapter, as the material that needs to be used to achieve that is more suited there.

II. Sunnah and Bid'ah as Non-Contrasted Technical Terms

In this section, we will be dealing with three texts, the first and third of which employ the term *bid'ah*, in ways understood by later commentators to be more or less technical, while the second employs the term *sunnah* in a way akin to the technical use of *bid'ah*. The texts are a Qur'ānic verse, a prophetic *ḥadīth*, and an *aṭar* (saying) attributed to a companion. What is striking about these texts is that they do not allow for the contrast between the two terms to take place. Moreover, the terms themselves, as they appear in the texts, are void of any value judgment. We will treat each text independently, showing in each how the technical term is related to the linguistic, and how it was understood in Islamic scholarship. Then we will draw some conclusions that relate to the three texts collectively.

A. The Qur'ānic Verse: "A Monasticism That they Ibtada'ū"

The first text is the following Qur'ānic verse, in which the verb *ibtada'a* of the eighth form appears:

Then, following them, We sent Our messengers, and followed them up with Jesus son of Mary, and granted him the Evangel. In the hearts of those who followed him We planted kindness and compassion; and also a monasticism that they *ibtada'ū* but which We did not ordain for them except to seek the good pleasure of God. But they did not do it justice. Hence, We granted those among them who believed their reward, but many of them are dissolute.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ "Tumma qaffaynā 'alā ātārihim bi-rusulīnā wa-qaffaynā bi-ʿĪsa bni Maryama wa-ātaynāhu l-inḡīla wa-ḡaʿalnā fī qulūbi l-ladīna ttabaʿūhu raʿfatan wa-raḥmatan wa-raḥbāniyyatani btadaʿūhā mā katabnāhā ʿalayhim illa

Words derived from the root *bd'* appear four times in the Qur'an: *bad'* appears twice, *bid'* once, and *ibtada'a* once also. The first three instances were discussed in the previous section,⁴¹ while the fourth is the one under investigation here. Monasticism in this verse satisfies all the conditions for *bid'a* in the technical sense as discussed in the first chapter. It is understood by commentators as an invention, as it is suggested by the use of the verb *ibtada'a*, and it is in the matters of religion and rituals. Being Qur'anic, we can think of this usage as the first attestation of the technical *bid'ah*, and hence it deserves our full attention.

Nevertheless, medieval commentators had to face three problems in dealing with this verse: (1) If monasticism is something invented by Christians, why does the verse attribute planting it in their hearts to God? Related to this is the question: how could monasticism be something planted in the hearts in the first place? (2) How can monasticism be a mere invention when the verse speaks of it as a Divine ordainment made for the specific purpose of seeking God's good pleasure? (3) The Christians in the verse are condemned for not doing monasticism the right way. How could there be a right way for doing a *bid'ah*? Shouldn't the whole practice of monasticism be condemned? In what follows, I will discuss the ways in which the medieval commentators unsuccessfully dealt with these problems, and then I will suggest a way to understand the verse that would, in my opinion, resolve these problems. Finally, I will discuss the significance of this for our understanding of the technical *bid'ah* in its early stage.

btigā'a riḍwāni l-Lāhi fa-mā ra'awahā ḥaqqā ri'āyatiḥā fa-āṭaynā l-laḍīna āmanū min-hum aḡrahum wa-kaṭīrun min-hum fāsiqūn;" Qur'an 57:27. I have kept *ibtada'u* untranslated.

⁴¹ See pp. 16 and 21 above.

The first question has a theological dimension. God's creation of human acts is one of the major disputes in Islamic theology. Mu'tazilites, on the one hand, claim that humans are solely responsible for their acts. Aš'arites, on the other, claim that all human actions are created by God.⁴² From this theological perspective, the apparent meaning of the verse is problematic for the Mu'tazilites, and less for the Aš'arites. If monasticism is created by Christians, as the verse is suggesting, then attributing that to God supports the claim that human actions are created by God.

Az-Zamaḥṣarī (d. 538/1144), the great Mu'tazilite commentator, solves this problem by some grammatical gymnastics. The *wa* (and) that introduces monasticism is not connecting it with God's implanted kindness and compassion. It is rather coordinating the verb *ibtada'a* with the verb *ġa'ala* (planted), or it is an incentive particle (*ḥarfu sti'nāf*).⁴³ "Monasticism" is then governed grammatically by the verb *ibtada'a* and not by *ġa'ala*.⁴⁴ This, however, creates a grammatical problem, for the verb *ibtada'a* is attached to a pronoun that refers to monasticism. If "monasticism" is considered a direct object for *ibtada'a*, so is the

⁴² This summary does not do justice to these positions; nevertheless, treating them in detail is beyond the scope of this dissertation. Although there is an abundance of literature on this, Harry Austryn Wolfson's treatment remains the most well-structured. See his *The Philosophy of the Kalam* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976), 601-719, and the summary, 733-9. Other schools of Islamic theology adopted either position, or combinations of both, although the Mu'tazilite position seems to be more dominant, except for the Māturīdīs.

⁴³ Az-Zamaḥṣarī does not state explicitly the way he treats the *wāw*; the analysis given here, however, seems to be presumed in his treatment; az-Zamaḥṣarī, *Kaššāf*, 4:481-2; see also Muḥammad aṭ-Ṭāhir ibn 'Āšūr, *Tafsīr at-taḥrīr wa-t-tanwīr* (Tunis: ad-Dār at-Tūnusiyyah li-n-Našr, 1984), 27:422-3.

⁴⁴ Az-Zamaḥṣarī, *Kaššāf*, 4:481-2.

pronoun that refers to “monasticism.” Arabic accepts this in some circumstances, and grammarians name the phenomenon *istigāl* (preoccupation, or distraction as translated by Howell). Howell gives the following definition of *istigāl* based on the work of Arab grammarians:

Distraction is that a n[oun] should precede, and be followed by a v[erb]... capable of governing what precedes it, the said v[erb]... being distracted from... it by governing (a) its pron[oun], literally... or constructively... or (b) what is pre[position] to its pron[oun]...⁴⁵

Thus, in the verse under discussion, we can say that what we have is a case of *istigāl*, and then we can say that “monasticism” is governed by *ibtada’a*. But this analysis is contested grammatically by the fact that “monasticism” in the verse is indefinite. For *istigāl* to occur, the preceding noun must be definite, or at least a specified indefinite that would allow the word to act as a subject (*mubtada’*) in a nominal sentence.⁴⁶ Attempts at saving the claim for *istigāl* in this verse seem unsatisfactory.⁴⁷

Despite this grammatical difficulty, this understanding of the verse is the one preferred by Mu‘atazilites in general, including, in addition to az-Zamahšarī, the great

⁴⁵ Mortimer Sloper Howell, *A Grammar of the Classical Arabic Language* (Allahabad: Oudh Government Press, 1880-1911), 1:202-3.

⁴⁶ Abū Ḥayyān, *Baḥr*, 10:115-6.

⁴⁷ See two such attempts in Šihāb ad-Dīn Abū at-Ṭanā’ al-Ālūsī, *Rūḥ al-ma’ānī fī tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘aẓīm wa-s-sab’ al-ma’ānī*, ed. Māhir Ḥabbūš et al. (Beirut: Mu’assasat ar-Risālah, 2010), 26:451.

grammarians Abū ‘Alī al-Fārisī (d. 377/987).⁴⁸ Nevertheless, it is by no means restricted to them. As a matter of fact, this understanding is the one implied in the *Tafsīr* of Muqātil (d. 150/767), in what arguably is the first attestation of it.⁴⁹ It is also the one adopted later by the Ḥanbalite az-Zağğāğ (d. 311/923), who was the teacher of the Abū ‘Alī al-Fārisī, and also the one chosen by an-Naḥḥās (d. 338/950).⁵⁰ Between al-Fārisī and az-Zamaḥṣārī, it was adopted also by the Šī‘ite aṭ-Ṭūsī (d. 459-60/1066-7) in his *Tibyān*.⁵¹ Moreover, the Šī‘ite aṭ-Ṭabrisī (d. 548/1154), contemporary to az-Zamaḥṣārī, adopted it also.⁵² After az-Zamaḥṣārī, this position gained popularity among several non-Mu‘tazilite scholars. Al-Qurṭubī (d. 671/1272), for example, preferred it over other interpretations.⁵³ Ibn

⁴⁸ ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq ibn ‘Aṭīyyah al-Andalusī, *al-Muḥarrar al-wağīz fī tafsīr al-kitāb al-‘azīz*, ed. ‘Abd as-Salām ‘Abd as-Šāfi Muḥammad (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 2001), 5:270; Abū Ḥayyān, *Baḥr*, 10:115-6.

⁴⁹ Muqātil b. Sulaymān al-Balḥī, *Tafsīr Muqātil b. Sulaymān*, ed. ‘Abd Allāh Maḥmūd Šaḥātah (Beirut: Mu‘assasat at-Tārīḥ al-‘Arabī, 2002), 4:246.

⁵⁰ Abū Ishāq az-Zağğāğ, *Ma‘ānī al-Qur’ān wa-i‘rābuhū*, ed. ‘Abd al-Ğalīl ‘Abduḥ Šalabī (Beirut: ‘Ālam al-Kutub, 1988), 5:130; Abū Ğa‘far an-Naḥḥās, *I‘rāb al-Qur’ān*, 3rd ed., ed. ‘Abd al-Mun‘im Ḥalīl Ibrāhīm (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 2001), 4:245.

⁵¹ Abū Ğa‘far aṭ-Ṭūsī, *at-Tibyān fī tafsīr al-Qur’ān*, ed. Aḥmad Ḥabīb Qašīr al-‘Āmilī (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā’ at-Turāṭ al-‘Arabī, 1989), 9:536.

⁵² Al-Faḍl b. al-Ḥasan aṭ-Ṭabrisī, *Mağma‘ al-bayān fī tafsīr al-Qur’ān* (Beirut: Dār al-‘Ulūm and Dār al-Murtaḍā, 2006), 9:309.

⁵³ Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Qurṭubī, *al-Ğāmi‘ li-aḥkām al-Qur’ān wa-l-mubayyin li-mā taḍammanahū min as-sunnah wa-āy al-Qur’ān*, ed. ‘Abd Allāh at-Turkī (Beirut: Mu‘assasat ar-Risālah, 2006), 17:271.

Taymiyyah (d. 728/1328) considered it a valid interpretation,⁵⁴ while Ibn al-Qayyim (d. 751/1350) adopted it decisively.⁵⁵

Two factors seem to make this interpretation appealing even for those who do not subscribe to the Muʿtazilite doctrine. The first is that monasticism was conceived by them as an institution that involves action. Hence, it cannot be “planted in the hearts,” along with kindness and compassion. The second is that the Qurʾānic verse does not seem to be making a theological statement about human deeds. Regardless of one’s theological preference, it seems quite unnatural to attribute monasticism to the implantation of God and to Christians’ invention in the same line. When the Qurʾān makes such theological statements, it is more decisive, and it brings attention to the matter through several rhetorical devices. For example, in the verses, “And have you given thought to what you plough? Is it you who sow it, or are We its sowers?”⁵⁶ the Qurʾān employs rhetorical questions. While in the verse:

You did not slay them; it was God who slew them. It was not you who threw when you threw, but God it was Who threw...⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Abū al-ʿAbbās Taqī ad-Dīn ibn Taymiyyah, *al-Ġawāb aṣ-ṣaḥīḥ li-man baddala dīn al-Masīḥ*, 2nd ed., ed. ʿAlī b. Ḥasan b. Nāṣir, ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Ibrāhīm al-ʿAskar, and Ḥamdān b. Muḥammad al-Ḥamdān (Riyadh: Dār al-ʿĀṣimah, 1999), 2:189-190.

⁵⁵ Abū ʿAbd Allāh ibn Qayyim al-Ġawziyyah, *Madāriġ as-sālikīn bayna manāzil “iyyāka naʿbudu wa-iyyāka nastaʿīn,”* 3rd ed., ed. Muḥammad Ḥamid al-Faqī (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1996), 2:60.

⁵⁶ “A-faraʾaytum mā taḥruṭūna a-antum tazraʿūnahū am naḥnu z-zāriʿūn,” Qurʾān, 56:63-4.

⁵⁷ “Fa-lam taqtulūhum wa-lākinna l-Lāha qatalahum wa-mā ramayta id ramyta wa-lākinna l-Lāha ramā,” Qurʾān, 8:17.

it employs the rhetorical device of *mušākalah* (contextual binding by resemblance).⁵⁸

Nothing of this seems to be in the verse under examination.

Still, the more natural way to read the verse while avoiding grammatical gymnastics is to read “monasticism” as governed by *ġa‘ala* (planted), and to read *ibtada‘ūhā* as a relative clause, in the way Khalidī’s translation is fashioned. Az-Zamaḥṣarī himself, seemingly not completely satisfied with his adopted reading, provides this as an alternative one. Nevertheless, in order to avoid the theological implications, and to solve the problems raised in the previous paragraph, he interpreted *ġa‘ala* in the verse to mean *waffaqa* (disposed).⁵⁹ In that sense, God disposed Christians to acting in kindness and compassion, and to this way of life that they invented. This interpretation seems far-fetched and self-serving, for there is no attestation for *ġa‘ala* being used to mean *waffaqa*.

Other commentators who were not bound by Mu‘tazilite doctrines but opted for the more natural reading solved the two problems by suggesting that “monasticism” is the determining noun (*al-muḍāfu ilay-h*) in an annexation construct (*iḍāfah*) where the annexed noun (*al-muḍāf*) has been dropped, but understood from the context to be “the love of” or something of that sort.⁶⁰ In Arabic grammar, when the annexed noun is dropped,

⁵⁸ On *mušākalah*, see Aḥmad al-Hāšimī, *Ġawāhir al-balāḡah* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 2001 [A reprint of an early twentieth century Egyptian edition]), 299-300. Nevertheless, even in such a verse, the soberer Aš‘arite commentators dismissed contextually that it is meant to reveal certain truths in matters of creed; see, e.g., Ibn ‘Āšūr, *Taḥrīr*, 9:294.

⁵⁹ Az-Zamaḥṣarī, *Kaššāf*, 4:482.

⁶⁰ Ġamāl ad-Dīn ibn Hišām, *Muġnī al-labīb ‘an kutub al-a‘ārib*, 6th ed., ed. Māzin al-Mubārak, Muḥammad ‘Alī Ḥamd Allāh, and Sa‘īd al-Afġānī (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1985), 752; Šihāb ad-Dīn Aḥmad

the determining noun takes its case,⁶¹ and hence, “monasticism” in the verse is in the accusative. The meaning then is that God planted in the hearts of Christians kindness, compassion, and the love of a monastic form of life that they invented. This clearly solves the two problems mentioned earlier. God planted the love of monasticism in the hearts, not monasticism itself. Only the latter is attributed to Christians, so that what God planted is different from what Christians invented. This interpretation, while less far-fetched than az-Zamaḥṣarī’s, is still not completely satisfying. Moreover, it creates its own problem. If monastic life is invented by Christians by means of *bid’ah*, then the love for monastic life should not be seen in the same positive light in which kindness and compassion are seen.

There are still other options to treat the verse in ways that suit the more natural reading of conjunction. It would have been difficult to account for these options had al-Ālūsī (d. 1270/1854) not done the job for us. He, in his usual compact but clear style, comments on the last two interpretations and summarizes the other options as follows:

It is obvious the divergence from the apparent [meaning] that this interpretation [of az-Zamaḥṣarī, that is the one in which he substitutes *waffaqa* for *ḡa’ala*,] contains. Nevertheless, in fairness, conjunction would not fit without such an interpretation. [Another option] would be considering [that there is in the verse a case of] dropping the annexed noun, and substituting it by the determining noun as it has been [suggested] earlier. [A third option] would be interpreting “monasticism” to be among heart deeds, such as [interpreting it as] being the extreme fear which demands excess in [acts of] worship. [In this case,] there would be a sort of teasing the boundaries of meaning (*taḡawwuz*) in [using] *ibtada’uhā* and

al-Ḥafāḡī, *Ḥaṣīyat aṣ-Šihāb ‘alā “Tafsīr al-Bayḏāwī” al-musammāh ‘ināyat al-qāḏī wa-kifāyat ar-rāḏī ‘alā “Tafsīr al-Bayḏāwī”* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1974), 8:163; al-Ālūsī, *Rūḥ*, 26:451.

⁶¹ Muṣṭafā al-Ġalāyīnī, *Ġāmi’ ad-durūs al-‘arabiyyah*, 28th ed., revised by ‘Abd al-Mun’im Ḥafāḡah (Saida and Beirut: al-Maktabah al-‘Aṣriyyah, 1993), 3:212-3.

what comes after it. The meaning would be something like inventing (*ibtidāʿ*) its [necessitated] acts and consequences. [A fourth option] would be considering [that there is] in the discourse [a case of] paronomasia (*istiḥdām*) where “monasticism” would have two meanings. [The first would be] the extreme fear for example, and it is the one intended in “We planted in their hearts a monasticism.” [The second would be] the hard acts of worship, such as rejecting this world and its lusts such as women and other [desires], and it is the one intended in “*ibtadaʿūhā*” and what comes after it. What requires [these] interpretations are not [the demands of the] Muʿtazilite [doctrines]. It is rather that monasticism, being acts of the body, cannot be among things planted in the heart, such as kindness and compassion. [This is food for] your thought.⁶²

The text admits that the difficulties in the text require second-order interpretations. This admission becomes even more significant coming from an Ašʿarite who is explicitly saying that the Muʿtazilite doctrine is not the source of these difficulties.⁶³ According to al-Ālūsī, all options require a sort of “divergence from the apparent [meaning] (*ʿudūlun ʿani z-ẓāhir*).”

⁶² “*Wa-lā yaḥfā mā fī ḥāda t-tafsīri min l-ʿudūli ʿani z-ẓāhiri lākinna l-inṣāfa anna-hū lā yaḥsunu l-ʿatfu bi-dūni ḥāda t-taʿwili awi ʿtibāri ḥadfi l-muḍāfi wa-iqāmati l-muḍāfi ilay-hi maqāmahū ʿalā mā taqaddama aw tafsīri r-raḥbāniyyati bi-mā huwa min afʿali l-qulūbi ka-l-ḥawfi l-mufriṭi l-muqtaḍi li-l-ḡuluwwi fī t-taʿabbudi wa-yurtakabu nawʿu taḡawwuzin fī btadaʿūhā wa-mā baʿdahū ka-an yakūna l-murādu btidaʿa aʿmāliḥā wa-āṭariḥā awi rtikābi stiḥdāmin fī l-kalāmi b-an yuʿtabara li-r-raḥbāniyyati maʿnayāni l-ḥawfu l-mufriṭu maṭalan wa-yurādu fī ḡaʿalnā fī qulūbihim raḥbāniyyatan wa-l-aʿmālu t-taʿabbudiyyatu š-šāqqatu ka-rafdi d-dunya wa-šahawātiḥā minā n-nisāʾi wa-ḡayrihinna wa-yurādu fī btadaʿūhā wa-mā baʿdahū wa-laysa d-dāʿiya li-t-taʿwili li-tizālu bal kawnu r-raḥbāniyyati bi-maʿna l-aʿmāli l-badaniyyati laysat mim-mā juḡʿalu fī l-qalbi ka-r-raʿfati wa-r-raḥmati fataʿammal;*” al-Ālūsī, *Rūḥ*, 26:452.

⁶³ This is quite different from the attitudes of several other Ašʿarite scholars, who seemingly dismiss the difficulties as purely dictated by Muʿtaziltes’ attempts at forcing their own creed upon the verse; cf. e.g. Faḥr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī, *at-Tafsīr al-kabīr* [= *Mafātiḥ al-ḡayb*], 3rd ed. (Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ at-Turāṭ al-ʿArabī, 1999), 29:474; Aḥmad ibn al-Munīr al-Iskandarī, *al-Intiṣāf fīmā taḍammanahū “al-Kaššāf,”* in the footnotes of *Al-Kaššāf ʿan ḥaqāʾiq ḡawāmiḍ at-tanzīl* by Ġār Allāh az-Zamaḥṣarī, 3rd ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1986), 4:481; and Abū Ḥayyān, *Baḥr*, 10:115-6.

One has to reinterpret *ġa'ala*, or assume a missing word before “monasticism”, or reinterpret “monasticism” and *ibtada'a*, or assume two meanings of “monasticism” functioning at the same time. We have already discussed the first two options. As for the fourth, it is quite unnatural to employ paronomasia in this context. Exploiting the multiple meanings of words is reserved usually to playful language, where the pun is intended for a humorous or rhetorical effect. This is clearly not the case here.

It seems then that the third option is the least forced one. Reinterpreting “monasticism” here is not a matter of extending its meaning, or interpreting it figuratively. It is rather looking at what is at the core of the monastic way of life; that is, the monastic *state of mind*. In that sense, this reinterpretation is not an instance of “divergence from the apparent [meaning].” Nevertheless, it requires a reinterpretation of *ibtada'a* that might involve such a divergence. What is interesting here is that in the only Qur'ānic verse that has the root *bd'* used in a more or less technical sense, a “teasing [of] the boundaries of meaning” is required for a smooth and natural reading. We will be returning to this once we have dealt with the two other questions that faced the medieval commentators.

The second question is: How can monasticism be a mere invention when the verse speaks of it as a Divine ordainment made for the specific purpose of seeking God's good pleasure? To answer this question, all the consulted commentators took the first statement, namely that monasticism is an invention, for granted. Then they had to ponder over the nature of the Divine ordainment that the verse mentions. They offered four different interpretations of the statement, “We did not ordain [it] for them except to seek the good pleasure of God,” all of which are designed to answer the proposed question.

The first interpretation, and arguably the most common one, is quite unsatisfying. Those who adopted it considered the exception in the statement to be a ruptured (*munqaṭi'*) one. A ruptured exception occurs when the thing excepted (*al-mustaṭnā*) “is severed from, or wholly different in kind from, the general term.”⁶⁴ In that sense, *ibtigā'* (seeking) is not a *maḥḥulun li-aḡlih* (motive object) of the verb “ordain” as the apparent meaning suggests, but rather it is the motive object of the verb *ibtada'ū*. Thus, the statement could be paraphrased as saying, “We did not ordain it for them, but they *ibtada'ū* it to seek the good pleasure of God.”⁶⁵ The problem suggested by the question is then resolved from the outset; for God never ordained monasticism.

Nevertheless, I believe that this is a quite unsatisfying interpretation. The notion of ruptured exception is introduced into Arabic grammar to account for statements such as, “The people did not stand up, but an ass (*mā qāma l-qawmu illā ḥimārā*).”⁶⁶ In such a statement, the apparent meaning does not coincide with the literal one. The listener does not assume that the speaker thinks that the ass is one of the people. He understands the

⁶⁴ Wright, *Grammar*, 2:336.

⁶⁵ This is the only interpretation given in aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, 22:427. It is the only accepted interpretation among several ones that are offered in Ibn al-Qayyim, *Madāriḡ*, 2:60-1. It is the preferred interpretation in az-Zamaḡṣarī, *Kaššāf*, 4:482. It is a valid interpretation among equally valid ones in ar-Rāzī, *Maḥāṭiḥ*, 29:474; and Abū al-Fidā' ibn Kaṭīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-aẓīm*, 2nd ed., ed. Samī b. Muḥammad as-Salāmah (Riyadh: Dār Ṭibah, 1999), 8:29. It is an alternative interpretation but not the chosen one in Abū Ḥayyān, *Baḥr*, 10:116; and aṭ-Ṭabrisī, *Maḡma'*, 9:310. It is mentioned but dismissed in Ibn Taymiyyah, *Ḡawāb*, 2:193. Among earlier authorities, this interpretation is attributed to Qatādah (d. 117/735) as stated by aṭ-Ṭabarī in his *Tafsīr* (22:427).

⁶⁶ Wright, *Grammar*, 2:337.

statement as suggesting that while nobody stood up, an ass did. Grammar steps in to account for this discrepancy between the two meanings. In that sense, grammar is describing what actually takes place when such a statement is uttered. As for the Qur'ānic verse, the situation is inverted. The given interpretation reflects neither the apparent meaning nor the literal one. It stems from the prescribed grammar rule; that is, it is inconceivable in a pre-theoretical age. This is supported by the fact that while in the classical example of ruptured exception both the ass and the people are substantive entities governed grammatically by the same verb, in the Qur'ānic verse, there is a need to introduce a new verb to break the conceptual relationship between seeking (being the motive object) and ordainment. It is as if this interpretation is assuming a ruptured exception occurring between two verbs rather than between two entities.

In the second interpretation, the general term in the exception is considered to be the pronoun in *katabnāhā* (We ordained it) which refers to monasticism. “Seeking” then is not a motive object, but rather a direct object. The meaning in this case would be that God did not ordain monasticism for the Christians, but what He ordained for them is seeking His good pleasure.⁶⁷ This interpretation assumes also a ruptured exception, albeit an even less plausible one. Although this interpretation assumes the verb *kataba* to be the one governing grammatically both the general term and the thing excepted, and thus it satisfies more the formalist grammarians, it lacks naturalness. When Sībawayhi (d. ca. 180/796)

⁶⁷ This is the only mentioned interpretation in al-Qurṭubī, *Ġāmi'*, 17:272. It is the only accepted one in Ibn Taymiyyah, *Ġawāb*, 2:191. It is the one preferred in aṭ-Ṭabrisī, *Mağma'*, 9:309; and seemingly in az-Zağğāğ, *Ma'ānī*, 5:130. It is a valid interpretation among equally valid ones in Ibn Kaṭīr, *Tafsīr*, 8:29; and aṭ-Ṭūsī, *Tibyān*, 9:573.

introduces the ruptured exception, he entitles the chapter, “On [the case where exception] would mean nothing except ‘but’.”⁶⁸ In all his given examples, there are inherent ambiguities. Once “but” is substituted for “except” (*illā*) the ambiguities disappear. Assuming that the Qur’ānic verse is ambiguous given that the apparent understanding implies the contradiction assumed in the second question, substituting “but” for *illā* does not lead to the proposed interpretation. The ambiguity remains.⁶⁹

The third interpretation is one that is offered only by Faḥr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī (d. 606/1209).⁷⁰ He offers it as an alternative interpretation to the first and as equally valid. Here, the natural reading that assumes that “seeking” is a motive object, and that it is

⁶⁸ “*Mā lā yakūnu illā ‘alā ma’nā wa-lākin*,” Sībawayhi ‘Amr b. ‘Uṭmān, *al-Kitāb*, 3rd ed., ed. ‘Abd as-Salām Hārūn (Cairo: Maktabat al-Ḥangī, 1988), 2:325.

⁶⁹ That some commentators accepted the first or second interpretations without hesitation can be understood given the hegemony of formal grammar. The general tendency in the history of Arabic linguistic thought was to move from grammar as a pragmatic discipline, as conceived and practiced by Sībawayhi and his generation, to a largely formalized discipline, as conceived and practiced by later grammarians; see Hanādī Dayyāh, “*Dawrā al-mutakallim wa-l-muḥāṭab fī at-tawāṣul aš-ṣafahī fī Kitāb Sībawayhi wa-aṭaruhuma fī taṭawwur at-turāt an-naḥwī al-‘arabī ḥattā al-qarn ar-rābī*” (PhD diss., American University of Beirut, 2016). For Sībawayhi and early grammarians, for example, the issue of what later grammarians call “ruptured exception” is understood in terms of the different meanings that *illā* can take depending on the intent of the speaker and are revealed to the hearer by linguistic and extra-linguistic contexts. Later formalist grammarians are more interested in issues of dependencies and case-endings. The notion of exception is the one that must be preserved across all uses of *illā*, but the type of dependency between the general term and the thing excepted varies, as this variance affects the case-ending that the thing excepted takes. Cf. ‘Alī Aḥmad Muḥammad Zāyid, *Illā bi-ma’nā lākin fī al-istiṭnā’ al-munqaṭi’ ḥasab dawqiyyāt al-luḡah wa-tawḡihāt al-luḡawiyyin wa-n-nuḥāh wa-l-mufasssīrīn: Dirāsah taḥlīliyyah istiṣṣā’iyyah fī al-Qur’ān al-karīm* (Cairo: Dār al-Manār, 1989).

⁷⁰ Ar-Rāzī, *Mafātīḥ*, 29:474.

governed grammatically by *kataba*, is maintained. Nevertheless, the verb *kataba* itself assumes a different meaning. The Christians did invent monasticism. But God then subjugated or subdued (*ta'abbada*) them through their own invention. Thus, *kataba* here means subjugating rather than ordaining. Ar-Rāzī's interpretation slenderly turns around the problem. Nevertheless, it is done in a retrospective fashion. It is hardly surprising that ar-Rāzī, being a first-rate theologian and jurisprudent, would come up with such an interpretation. The association between *kataba* and *ta'abbada* assumes the developed theories of obligation, in the manner that one finds in works such as the *Muḥīṭ* of 'Abd al-Ġabbār (d. 415/1025),⁷¹ or in the introductory chapters in the more sophisticated jurisprudence works. Nevertheless, for this very reason, this interpretation must be dismissed.

The fourth and final interpretation assumes the more natural reading of the verse. "Seeking" is a motive object, and it is governed grammatically by *kataba*, and *kataba* means ordaining.⁷² Khalidi's translation of the verse, which we adopted above, is based upon this interpretation. Commentators who adopted it, or considered it valid, came up with two closely related answers to our starting question. The first is that monasticism is analogous

⁷¹ 'Abd al-Ġabbār b. Aḥmad al-Hamaḍānī, *K. al-Mağmū' fī "al-Muḥīṭ bi-t-taklīf,"* in the recension of Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan ibn Mattawayhi, ed. J. J. Houben, Daniel Gimaret, and Jan Peters (Beirut: Dār al-Mašriq, 1965-1999).

⁷² This is the interpretation preferred in Abū Ḥayyān, *Baḥr*, 10:116. It is a valid interpretation among equally valid ones in aṭ-Ṭūsī, *Tibyān*, 9:537. It is an alternative interpretation but not the chosen one in az-Zamaḥṣārī, *Kaššāf*, 4:482; aṭ-Ṭabrisī, *Mağma'*, 9:310; and seemingly in az-Zağğāg, *Ma'ānī*, 5:130. It is mentioned but categorically dismissed in Ibn Taymiyyah, *Ġawāb*, 2:193; and Ibn al-Qayyim, *Madāriğ*, 2:60. Among earlier authorities, this interpretation is attributed to Muğāhid (d. ca. 102/720) as stated by Abū Ḥayyān in his *Baḥr* (10:116), and al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728) as stated by aṭ-Ṭūsī in his *Tibyān* (9:537).

to *naḍr* (vow). The *naḍr* is an obligation that one takes upon herself. Nevertheless, once taken, fulfilling it becomes a religious duty obligated by God.⁷³ The second is that God, once the Christians invented monasticism, ordained it for them.⁷⁴

As we have said, this forth reading is more natural. Nevertheless, the tension between *kataba* and *ibtada'a* in the verse makes it demoted by most scholars to a merely valid interpretation among others. But for Ibn Taymiyyah and his school, who are more sensitive to the issue of *bid'ah*, this interpretation must be dismissed at any cost. How can God ordain monasticism for Christians if it is their *bid'ah*? This leads us to the third question, in dealing with which Ibn Taymiyyah and his school differed from most other commentators.

The third question is: The Christians in the verse are condemned for not doing monasticism the right way; how could there be a right way for doing a *bid'ah*? Shouldn't the whole practice of monasticism be condemned? The validity of this question is obviously dependent on the answer given to the previous question. If God ordained monasticism from Christians, even if this was after they had invented it, then there is no question to start with. But if God did not ordain it for them, how should we understand the statement that "they did not do it justice"?

⁷³ Az-Zaḡḡāg, *Ma'ānī*, 5:130; aṭ-Ṭabrisī, *Maḡma'*, 9:310; aṭ-Ṭūsī, *Tibyān*, 9:537; Abū Ḥayyān, *Baḥr*, 10:116.

⁷⁴ Aṭ-Ṭūsī, *Tibyān*, 9:537; az-Zamaḥṣarī, *Kaššāf*, 4:482. Among earlier authorities, this answer is attributed to al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī as stated by aṭ-Ṭūsī in his *Tibyān* (9:537).

The general attitude of the commentators is quite permissive. There is no condemnation of neither monasticism nor of *bid'ah* in the verse.⁷⁵ What is being condemned is rather the nonfulfillment of duties required by the undertaken monastic way of life. Some would even go further to say that the condemnation implied in “they did not do it justice” is not strictly related to monasticism itself, but to certain beliefs that Christians hold such as trinity, or to their disbelief in the prophecy of Muḥammad.⁷⁶

This general attitude is enforced by several exegetical anecdotes that are narrated in commentaries and collections of traditions. For example, it is attributed to Ibn Mas'ūd (d. 32/652-3), the companion of the prophet, that he quoted the prophet telling him,

God has split the people who preceded us into seventy-one sects. Only three of them attained salvation, while the rest fell into perdition. One of these three groups resisted the kings and fought them in the [name] of the religion of God and Jesus, son of Mary, peace be upon him. The kings [managed to] kill them. [The second] group did not have that much fighting strength to resist kings. They stayed among their people calling them to the religion of God and Jesus, son of Mary, peace be upon him. The kings killed them [also], ripped them apart with saws. [The third] group did not have that much strength to resist kings, nor to remain among their people calling them to the religion of God and Jesus, peace be upon him. Therefore, they took to the forests and mountains, and became monks. It is to this third group that Almighty God [refers] when He says, “and also a monasticism that they *ibtada'ū* but which We did not ordain for them.”⁷⁷

⁷⁵ This is implied in most commentaries. Moreover, it is explicitly stated in ar-Rāzī, *Mafātīḥ*, 29:474; al-Ālūsī, *Rūḥ*, 26:455; Ibn 'Āšūr, *Tahrīr*, 27:424.

⁷⁶ See these alternative understandings in ar-Rāzī, *Mafātīḥ*, 29:474; aṭ-Ṭabrisī, *Mağma'*, 9:310; and Abū Ḥayyān, *Baḥr*, 10:116.

⁷⁷ “*Iḥtalafa man kāna qablanā ‘alā iḥdā wa-sab‘ina firqatan nağā min-hum ṭalātun wa-halaka sā’iruhum firqatun mina ṭ-ṭalāṭi āzati l-mulūka wa-qātalathum ‘alā dīni l-Lāhi wa-dīni ‘Īsa bni Maryama ṣalawātu l-Lāhi*

What is important here is that those who pursued the monastic way of life are said to have attained their salvation. They are credited for that, rather than being condemned. Commentaries are full of traditions that support this claim. Authenticating these traditions is not a main concern here. Exegetical anecdotes are of dialectical nature. They reflect the way certain verses were conceived by the earlier community; then, they give this conception a body and a shape. Later on, they come to shape the way later commentators perceive the text.

Ibn Taymiyyah and his school took a very different attitude. Ibn Kaṭīr (d. 774/1373), for example, commented on “they did not do it justice” by saying:

This [sentence] is censuring [the Christians] for two matters: first, for inventing things in their religion, things which God did not legislate for them; secondly, for not fulfilling the requirements of the commitments to which they committed themselves and which they claimed were means of drawing near to God.⁷⁸

One must wonder if Ibn Kaṭīr was reading from the same Qur’ān. The soberer Ibn Taymiyyah understood that the sentence may be understood as endorsing the foundation

‘alayhi faqatalathumu l-mulūku wa-firqatun lam takun la-hum ṭāqatun bi-mu’āzāti l-mulūki fa-aqāmū bayna zahrānāy qawmihim yad’ūnahum ilā dīni l-Lāhi wa-dīni ‘Īsa bni Maryama ṣalawātu l-Lāhi ‘alayhi faqatalathumu l-mulūku wa-naṣarathum bi-l-manāṣiri wa-firqatun lam takun la-hum ṭāqatun bi-mu’āzāti l-mulūki wa-lā bi-l-muqāmi bayna zahrānāy qawmihim yad’ūnahum ilā dīni l-Lāhi wa-dīni ‘Īsa ṣalawātu l-Lāhi ‘alayhi fa-laḥiqū bi-lbarārī wa-l-ḡibālī fa-tarahhabū fi-hā fa-huwa qawlu l-Lāhi ‘azza wa-ḡalla wa-rahbāniyyatani btada’ūhā mā katabnāhā ‘alayhim;” aṭ-Ṭabarī, Tafsīr, 22:430-1. It is narrated also in most commentaries.

⁷⁸ “Wa-hāḏā ḍammun la-hum min waḡhayni aḥaduhumā fi li-btidā’i fi dīni l-Lāhi mā lam ya’mur bi-hi l-Lāhu wa-t-tānī fi ‘adami qiyāmihim bi-ma ltazamūhu mim-mā za’amū anna-hū qurbatun yuqarribuhim ila l-Lāh;” Ibn Kaṭīr, Tafsīr, 8:29.

of invented monasticism, while condemning the nonfulfillment of its duties. He commented on such understanding:

There is nothing in the discourse that indicates such [understanding]. It rather indicates that they, nonfulfilling [monastic duties], deserve certain censure that they do not deserve otherwise. Thus, the censure that he who invented *bid'ah* but did not do it justice [deserves] is greater than censure that he who did it justice [deserves]; although neither is praised. Rather, [both] are censured.⁷⁹

Of course, that both “are censured” is imposed on the verse to satisfy Ibn Taymiyyah’s own prejudices. But it seems that this was the statement that Ibn Kaṭīr was contemplating when he offered his commentary.⁸⁰

It seems that Ibn ‘Āṣūr (d. 1393/1973) had Ibn Taymiyyah and his school in mind when he said commenting on the verse:

In the verse, there is an evidence for *bid'ah*’s division into praised and censured[...]. As for those who tried to restrict it in [the domain of] censure, they had no way out.⁸¹

⁷⁹ “*Laysa fi l-kalāmi mā yadullu ‘alā ḍālika bal yadullu ‘alā anna-hum ma’a ‘adami r-ri‘āyati yastahiqquna mina ḍ-ḍammi mā lā yastahiqqūnahū bi-dūni ḍālika fayakūnu ḍammu mani btada’a l-bid’ata wa-lam yar’ahā ḥaqqā ri‘āyatiḥā a’zama min ḍammi man ra’ahā wa-in lam yakun wāḥidun min-humā maḥmūdan bal maḍmūma;*” Ibn Taymiyyah, *Ġawāb*, 2:198.

⁸⁰ It is interesting to note here that Ibn al-Qayyim, who rarely breaks with his master, seems to be here at odd with him. Their divergence in interpreting this verse starts with what we have noted in n. 65, p. 39, where Ibn al-Qayyim decisively chooses an interpretation that is categorically dismissed by Ibn Taymiyyah. As for the issue under consideration here, Ibn al-Qayyim seems to avoid the question altogether; *Madāriḡ*, 60-1.

⁸¹ “*Wa-fiḥā ḥuḡḡatun li-nqisāmi l-bid’ati ilā maḥmūdatin wa-maḍmūma [...]* *Wa-amma l-laḍīna ḥāwalū ḥaṣrahā fi ḍ-ḍammi fa-lam yaḡidū maṣrifā;*” Ibn ‘Āṣūr, *Tahrīr*, 27:424.

Ibn ‘Āšūr refers his reader to al-Qarāfī (d. 684/1285), who argues that *bid‘ah* can take any of the five values known in Islamic jurisprudence.⁸² Al-Ālūsī argues for the same, but he refers his reader to an-Nawawī (d. 676/1277) and Ibn al-Aṭīr (d. 606/1210).⁸³

Now that we are done with our exposition of the difficulties that faced the medieval (and modern) commentators in treating this verse, we will take part in the discussion by pointing out to a rhetorical feature, the treatment of which is missing in the works of commentators; namely, rhetorical parallelism.⁸⁴ The part of the verse that was under investigation in the last few pages is the following:

⁸² Ibn ‘Āšūr, *Tahrīr*, 27:424. Šihāb ad-Dīn al-Qarāfī’s treatment appears in his *al-Furūq* [= *Anwār al-burūq fī anwā’ al-furūq*], glossed by Ibn aš-Šāṭṭ, summarized on the margin by Muḥammad b. ‘Alī b. Ḥusayn (Beirut: ‘Ālam al-Kutub, n.d. [A reprint of an old edition]), 4:202ff. See also p. 3 above and n. 91, p. 52 below.

⁸³ Al-Ālūsī, *Rūḥ*, 26:455-6. Abū Zakariyyā Muḥyī ad-Dīn an-Nawawī’s treatment appears in his *Šarḥ an-Nawawī* [*alā “Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim” = al-Minhāğ*], in the lower margins of *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, by Muslim b. al-Ḥağğāğ al-Quṣayrī, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā’ at-Turāṭ al-‘Arabī, 1972), 6:154-5; and in his *Tahdīb al-asmā’ wa-l-luğāt* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1980 [A reprint of al-Maṭba‘ah al-Muniriyyah edition of Cairo]), 3:22-3. Mağd ad-Dīn Abū as-Sa‘ādāt ibn al-Aṭīr’s treatment appears in his *Ğāmi‘ al-uṣūl fī aḥādīṭ ar-rasūl*, ed. ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Arnā’ūt (Damascus: Maktabat al-Ḥalawānī, Maṭba‘at al-Mallāḥ, and Dār al-Bayān, 1969-1972), 1:280-1.

⁸⁴ Although parallelism as a rhetorical device was widely employed in Semitic literatures, it was not studied thoroughly until modern times, and mainly in reference to Biblical material. Robert Lowth (d. 1787) was the first to give it a full treatment in his studies on the Hebrew Bible. The best contemporary introduction to the field remains Roland Meynet’s *Rhétorique sémitique* which was written in collaboration with few other scholars and published in 1998, although an earlier edition appeared in Arabic in 1993 under the title *Ṭarīqat at-taḥlīl al-balāğī*. See Roland Meynet, *Rhétorique sémitique: textes de la Bible et de la tradition musulmane*, in collaboration with L. Pouzet, N. Farouki, and A. Sinno (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1998); and Rūlān Miniḥ [= Roland Meynet], *Ṭarīqat at-taḥlīl al-balāğī wa-t-tafsīr: Taḥlīlāt an-nuṣūṣ min al-Kitāb al-muqaddas wa-min al-ḥadīṭ an-nabawī aš-šarīf*, in collaboration with Luwīs Pūzih [= Louis Pouzet], N. Fārūqī, and A. Sinnū, trans.

In the hearts of those who followed him We planted kindness and compassion; and also a monasticism that they *ibtadaʿū* but which We did not ordain for them except to seek the good pleasure of God. But they did not do it justice.

We have seen that most of the commentators' efforts was focused on giving an adequate grammatical analysis of this part. The segment consists of four clauses. A major and a minor grammatical disputes arise. The major dispute is over whether we should treat the second clause as independent from the first, or as a relative clause. The minor dispute is over whether we should treat the exception in the third clause as a ruptured exception or a normal one. Had it not been for the tension between the three verbs *ġaʿala*, *ibtadaʿa*, and *kataba*, and, in the case of Ibn Taymiyyah and his school, for the doctrinal prejudices against *bidʿah*, the more natural reading of having the second clause as a relative clause dependent on the first, and of having a normal exception rather than a ruptured one in the third, would have been hardly contested. I will argue in what follows that if we accept this reading and then move in our analysis from the grammatical level to the rhetorical one, the tension between the three verbs will autonomously find its resolution.

Ġarġūrah Ḥardān and Hinrī ʿUways (Beirut: Dār al-Mašriq, 1993). To avoid unpleasant consequences, Meynet chooses his Arabic examples from prophetic traditions rather than the Qurʾān. But what makes Meynet's work special is that it shows how rhetorical analysis, when done properly, can be used effectively as a hermeneutical tool. In Qurʾānic studies, several contemporary scholars started paying attention to the role of rhetorical devices in constructing the meaning of the text. The works of Angelika Neuwirth, Mustansir Mir, Naṣr Ḥamid Abū Zayd, and Neal Robinson, can serve as good examples for this approach. Nevertheless, Michel Cuypers, in his *The Composition of the Qurʾan: Rhetorical Analysis*, trans. Jerry Ryan (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), seems to be the most attentive to the role of parallelism and other specifically Semitic features that were not employed in Greek rhetoric in the construction of the Qurʾān. His work can be seen as an extension to the pioneering work of Meynet.

Each of the four clauses has a different verb. The subject of the first and third verbs is God, while the subject of the second and fourth is the Christians. To express this visually, we can rewrite the verse as such:

- A In the hearts of those who followed him We planted [...] a monasticism
- B that they *ibtada'ū*
- C but which We did not ordain for them except to seek the good pleasure of God.
- D But they did not do it justice.

Moreover, a close look at the parallelism suggested by the variance in the subject reveals that it is even more profound. The apparent tension between the verbs *ḡa'ala* and *ibtada'a* in A and B seems to be deliberately devised to enforce the contrast between A and B established by the subject change. This contrast, in turn, is paralleled to the contrast between C and D established by the change in subject and enforced by the contrast between “seek[ing] the good pleasure of God,” and “not do[ing] it justice.” C, sharing the subject of A, seems to be expanding the idea of A. Similarly, D, sharing the subject of B, seems to be expanding its idea. To reflect these observations, we can now rename the four clauses as such: A, ~A, A', and ~A'. Using technical terms, we can summarize our observations as follows: The rhetorical effect of the segment is achieved through a major synthetic parallelism between A and ~A on the one side, and A' and ~A' on the other, which is maintained by two minor synthetic parallelisms between A and A', and between ~A and ~A', and two minor antithetic parallelisms between A and ~A, and between A' and ~A'.⁸⁵

⁸⁵ I am using here the terms as used and defined by Robert Lowth; see his “Preliminary Dissertation,” in *Isiah: A New Translation, with a Preliminary Dissertation and Notes* (Boston: Printed and published by Joseph T. Buckingham, Winter-Street, 1815), 10ff.

Once we read the segment in this light, the problem referred to in the second of our starting questions is incidentally resolved. The third clause (A') is an expansion of the first (A); it repeats the main idea and adds new elements. In A, God planted monasticism in the Christians' hearts. A' gives the teleological reason for this implantation. In that sense, the verb *kataba* must be understood as *foreordaining* rather than ordaining; an understanding that is completely feasible linguistically⁸⁶ but overlooked by the commentators because of their linear reading.⁸⁷ *Kataba* then becomes another synonym for *ḡa'ala*. No need to assume a different undocumented meaning for *kataba* (as ar-Rāzī suggests) nor to assume a ruptured exception.

As for the second clause, its contrast with the first must be maintained without creating a contradiction. In both, "monasticism" is the direct object. When *ibtada'a* is understood to mean inventing, it becomes almost synonymous to *ḡa'ala*. This creates a contradiction between A and ~A. Al-Ālūsī, as we have seen,⁸⁸ suggests the possibility that the word *ibtada'a* is used in the verse in a way that involves "teasing the boundaries of [its]

⁸⁶ This is supported by the fact that the verb *kataba* was used in that sense several times in the Qur'ān; See Qur'ān, 2:187, 5:21, 9:51, 58:21-22, 59:3; cf. also 6:12, 54. If one counts other derivatives from the verb *kataba*, the list becomes quite extensive. One might argue, however, that in our verse the preposition *'alā* (on) after the verb would make this interpretation unlikely. Nevertheless, in Qur'ān, 22:4, the preposition *'alā* is used after *kutiba*, the passive form of *kataba*, universally understood there as being foreordained.

⁸⁷ It is not clear if this is what Abū Ḥayyān (d. 745/1344) means when he says that when reading the exception as a normal (i.e., not ruptured) one, "*kataba* would have the meaning of *qaḏā* (*wa-yakūnu kataba bi-ma'nā qaḏā*);" *Baḥr*, 10:116. Abū Ḥayyān's statement is ambiguous, for the verb *qaḏā*, like *kataba*, can take both meanings.

⁸⁸ See p. 37 above.

meaning (*tağawwuz*).” Nevertheless, what al-Ālūsī calls *tağawwuz* is what we call using the word in its literal linguistic meaning that we have established earlier.⁸⁹ If we adopt that meaning, *ibtada‘a* would then mean acting *independently* upon something, or choosing something *independently*. The meaning of the two clauses becomes that God planted the monastic state of mind in the hearts of Christians, and then the Christians acted independently on that, giving monasticism form and shape, and thus chose it as a way of live. The contrast is then maintained without becoming a contradiction.

The fourth clause expands the idea of the second clause by blaming the Christians for their own shortcomings. The Christians who transformed the monastic state of mind to a normative way of life did not follow their own prescriptions.

This interpretation of the verse requires a new translation. An adequate translation would be something like this:

- A In the hearts of those who followed him, We planted [...] a monasticism,
 ~A upon which they acted independently.
 A’ We did not foreordain it for them [in their hearts] except to seek God’s pleasure.
 ~A’ But [when they acted upon that], they did not do it justice.

This translation answers the three starting questions by deeming them irrelevant. Moreover, this is done without the need to “divert from the apparent meaning.”

Based on this interpretation, the Qur’ān’s use of *ibtada‘a* conforms to its linguistic meaning rather than to its technical one. But this has an enormous impact on our understanding of the technical *bid‘ah* framework. To show that let us start by observing first that creating a monastic way of life out of the monastic state of mind that God planted

⁸⁹ See p. 26 above.

in the Christians' heart is an act that fulfills the conditions necessary to call it a *bid'ah* in the technical sense,⁹⁰ regardless of whether this act deserves condemnation or not. Nevertheless, it is not only that the Qur'ān partially endorses this act, a fact that can be accounted for through the distinction introduced by the scholars, *pace* Ibn Taymiyyah and his school, between different types of *bid'ah*, but also it is silent about this *bid'ah* being a *bid'ah*. The very fact that the Qur'ān uses the verb *ibtada'a* in this verse in its linguistic sense when speaking of an actual religious innovation becomes an evidence for the absence of the technical *bid'ah* (reprehensible innovation) category within the Qur'ānic framework. Moreover, the fact that the *bid'ah* can start with a disposition that God creates makes the whole concept of *bid'ah* as a reprehensible innovation non-Qur'ānic if not un-Qur'ānic.⁹¹

⁹⁰ It is an innovation that has not been sanctioned explicitly by the lawgiver, and it is religious. More on these conditions in chapter six.

⁹¹ This final result, however, is not completely at odds with what the commentators have to say. When the commentators, *pace* Ibn Taymiyyah and his school, bring the distinction between types of *bid'ah* into the discussion, they are, in fact, devoiding *bid'ah* of any usefulness. It becomes an empty category. If *bid'ah* can be anything from a prohibited act to an obligatory act, then being a *bid'ah* has no religious or legal consequences. These consequences stem from other considerations. Nevertheless, *bid'ah* is not an empty category. We will see, in the next chapters, how the technical *bid'ah* framework was devised to offer a coherent account of orthodoxies. We will see also that different conceptions of *bid'ah* reveal different stages. Nevertheless, as we shall see, later medieval scholars had at their disposal sets of powerful theological and legal principles that deem the technical *bid'ah* framework useless. But they inherited the different conceptions of *bid'ah*. And now it is the time for them to ahistorically offer a synthesis that actually says nothing. This explains why our interpretation of the verse is distinctive, albeit not completely at odds with what the earlier commentators had to say. We preserve the importance of the technical *bid'ah* by isolating it from our interpretation. Ibn Taymiyyah and his school, on the other hand, having abandoned many of the theological and legal principles that dominated scholarly Islam, had to retreat to a certain coherent conception of *bid'ah*. But a coherent conception of *bid'ah* is a product of time. It cannot do when dealing with a verse that was revealed in the preconceptual era. No wonder that all Ibn Taymiyyah's choices in reading this verse are among

B. The Ḥadīṭ of the Good Sunnah and the Bad Sunnah

The second text that we are discussing in this chapter is the following saying attributed to the prophet, and narrated on the authority of Ḡarīr b. ‘Abd Allāh (d. ca. 51/671):

He who introduces some good practice (*sanna sunnatan ḥasanah*) in Islam which is followed [by other people] is to be assured of rewards similar to the rewards of those who follows it, without their rewards being diminished in any respect. And he who introduces some evil practice (*sanna sunnatan sayyi’ah*) in Islam which is followed [by others] is to be required to bear burdens similar to the burdens of those who follows this [evil practice] without their burdens being diminished in any respect.⁹²

The context of this *ḥadīṭ* is provided in most versions. The prophet is said to have had asked people to donate money in support of certain poor Bedouins. Nevertheless, people

the most imposed and artificial choices. The reader can follow Ibn Taymiyyah’s interpretation by referring to n. 54, p. 34, n. 65, p. 39, n. 67, p. 40, n. 72, p. 42, and n. 79, p. 46 above, and their accompanying texts.

⁹² “*Man sanna fi l-islāmi sunnatan ḥasanatan fa-‘umila bi-hā ba’dahū kutiba la-hū miṭlu aḡri man ‘amila bi-hā wa-lā yanquṣu min uḡūrihim ṣay’un wa-man sanna fi l-islāmi sunnatan sayyi’atan fa-‘umila bi-hā ba’dahū kutiba ‘alay-hi miṭlu wizri man ‘amila bi-hā wa-lā yanquṣu min awzārihim ṣay’;*” Muslim b. al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ al-Quṣayrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, ed. Muḥammad Fu’ād ‘Abd al-Bāqī (Cairo: Dār Iḥyā’ al-Kutub al-‘Arabiyyah, 1955-6), §6897. The *ḥadīṭ* can be found also with minor variations in: ‘Abd ar-Razzāq b. Hammām aṣ-Ṣan’ānī, *al-Muṣannaḡ*, 2nd ed., ed. Ḥabīb ar-Raḥmān al-A’zamī (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1983), §21025; Abū Bakr ibn Abī Ṣaybah, *al-Muṣannaḡ*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Awwāmah (Jeddah: Dār al-Qiblah, and Damascus: Mu’assasat ‘Ulūm al-Qur’ān, 2006), §§9895-6; Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad al-imām Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal*, ed. Abū al-Ma’āṭī an-Nūrī et al. (Beirut: ‘Ālam al-Kutub, 1998), §§19370, 19396-7, 19388-9, 19414, 19416, 19420; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, §§2314-7, 6898-900; Muḥammad ibn Māḡah al-Qazwīnī, *as-Sunan*, ed. Šu’ayb al-Arnā’uṭ (Damascus: Dār ar-Risālah al-‘Ālamiyyah, 2009), §203; Abū ‘Isā at-Tirmidī, *al-Ġāmi’ al-kabīr: Sunan at-Tirmidī*, ed. Šu’ayb al-Arnā’uṭ and ‘Abd al-Laṭīf Ḥirz Allāh (Beirut: Dār ar-Risālah al-‘Ālamiyyah, 2010), §2675; Abū ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān an-Nasā’ī, *Sunan an-Nasā’ī*, commentated upon by Ġalāl ad-Dīn as-Suyūṭī, and Muḥammad as-Sindī (Cairo: al-Maktabah at-Tiḡāriyyah, 1930), 5:75. A similar *ḥadīṭ* is narrated on the authority of Abū Ḡuḡayfah in Ibn Māḡah, *Sunan*, §207.

were not enthusiastic to do so. Then, one among the *anṣār* (literally, supporters; that is the local people of Medina, in contrast to immigrants from Mecca) stood up and donated a bundle of silver. Then, people followed his example and started to donate enthusiastically.⁹³

The *ḥadīṭ* uses the term *sunnah* without restricting it to the *sunnah* of the prophet. In that sense, the term is not used technically. Muslim scholars who accepted the distinction between praised and censured *bidʿah* claim that this *ḥadīṭ* is talking about types of *bidʿah*, although it names it *sunnah*.⁹⁴ Nevertheless, given the context of the *ḥadīṭ*, the (praised) act referred to by the prophet does not seem qualified to be called a *bidʿah* in the technical sense of innovation. This is what allowed the scholars who rejected the distinction between praised and censured *bidʿah* to rightly claim that *bidʿah* can be applied only to the second category mentioned in the *ḥadīṭ*.⁹⁵ But this creates its own problem. The *ḥadīṭ* contrasts the good *sunnah* with the bad *sunnah*. This means that *bidʿah* is contrasted with the good *sunnah* established by *muslims* and not with the technical *sunnah*. In that sense, it is not only that the technical terms are missing in the *ḥadīṭ*, but also the basic contrast between *sunnah* and *bidʿah* in their technical sense, without which the whole framework of *sunnah* and *bidʿah*, as we know in later literature, cannot be established. Thus, this *ḥadīṭ* becomes an evidence for the absence of a such a framework of applying these terms.

⁹³ We have followed the narrative as found in Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, §6897. Most of the sources mentioned in the previous note give more or less similar accounts.

⁹⁴ See, e.g., an-Nawawī, *Ṣarḥ “Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim,”* 7:104-5.

⁹⁵ See, e.g., Abū Ishāq aṣ-Ṣāṭibi, *al-Fṭiṣām*, ed. Muḥammad b. ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān aṣ-Ṣuqayr, Sa’d b. ‘Abd Allāh Āl Ḥumayd, and Hiṣām b. Ismā‘īl aṣ-Ṣinī (Riyadh: Dār Ibn al-Ġawzī, 2008), 1:311-6.

C. The *Aṭar* of ‘Umar: What an Excellent *Bid‘ah* This Is

The third text is the following *aṭar* narrated on the authority of az-Zuhrī (d. 124/742), who narrated it on the authority of ‘Urwah b. az-Zubayr (d. 93-4/711-3), who quoted ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān b. ‘Abd al-Qārī (d. 80/698-9) saying,

I went out with ‘Umar b. al-Ḥaṭṭāb in Ramadan to the mosque and [found] the people there spread out in groups. Some men were praying by themselves, whilst others were praying in small groups. ‘Umar said, “By God! In my opinion, it would be better if I gathered these people behind one reciter.” So, he gathered them behind Ubayy b. Ka‘b. Then I went out with him another night and the people were praying behind their Qur‘ān reciter. ‘Umar said, “What an excellent *bid‘ah* this is! But the [payer] that you miss while you are asleep is better than the one that you are offering.” He meant the end of the night, for people were offering [their prayers] at the beginning of the night [only].⁹⁶

The *aṭar* is concerned with what came to be known as *ṣalātu t-tarāwīḥ* (literally, the prayer of spread rests; that is, Ramadan nightly prayer). The *aṭar*, considered as having a reliable chain of transmitters by medieval critical standards, suggests that ‘Umar I (d. 23/644) initiated this practice during his reign (13-23/634-44). There is no reason to doubt this.

⁹⁶ “*Ḥaraḡtu ma‘a ‘Umara bni l-Ḥaṭṭābi fī Ramaḍāna ila l-masḡidi fa-ida n-nāsu awzā‘un mutafarriqūna yuṣalli r-raḡulu li-naṣsihi wa-yuṣalli r-raḡulu fa-yuṣalli bi-ṣalātihi r-raḡtu fa-qāla ‘Umaru wa-l-Lāhi innī la-arānī law ḡama‘tu hā‘ulā‘i ‘alā qārī‘in wāḥidin la-kāna amṭala fa-ḡama‘ahum ‘alā Ubayyi bni Ka‘bin qāla tumma ḥaraḡtu ma‘ahū laylatan uḥrā wa-n-nāsu yuṣallūna bi-ṣalāti qārī‘ihim fa-qāla ‘Umaru ni‘mati l-bid‘atu hādihī wa-l-latī tanāmūna ‘an-hā aḡḡalū mina l-latī taqūmūna ya‘nī āḥira l-layli wa-kāna n-nāsu yaqūmūna awwalah;*” Mālik b. Anas, *al-Muwaṭṭa’*, 2nd ed., in the recension of Yaḥyā b. Yaḥyā al-Layṭī, ed. Baššār ‘Awwād Ma‘rūf (Beirut: Dār al-Ġarb al-Islāmī, 1997), §301. It is found also in Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Ismā‘il al-Buḥārī, *al-Ġāmi‘ aṣ-ṣaḥiḥ al-musnad*, ed. Muḥibb ad-Dīn al-Ḥaṭīb, Muḥammad Fu‘ād ‘Abd al-Bāqī, and Quṣayy Muḥibb ad-Dīn al-Ḥaṭīb (Cairo: al-Maṭba‘ah as-Salafiyyah, 1979), §2010, on the authority of at-Tanīsī (d. 218/832-3), who narrated it on the authority of Mālik (d. 179/796). ‘Abd ar-Razzāq (d. 211/827), on the other hand, narrated it on the authority of Ma‘mar (d. 153/770), who narrated it from az-Zuhrī directly (*Muṣannaḡ*, §7723).

For one, the practice is considered a recommendable practice in all four law schools of Sunnī Islam. If narrators were to attribute the practice disingenuously, they would have attributed it to the prophet himself. Moreover, the positions of the Šīʿites and Ibādīs on the matter support such an attribution. The Šīʿites condemn the practice, as it was allegedly not authorized by the prophet.⁹⁷ On the other hand, the Ibādīs recommend it.⁹⁸ This suggests that the congregational *ṣalātu t-tarāwīḥ* is a quite early practice. If the practice were Umayyad, one should expect a condemnation by both the Šīʿites and Ibādīs.⁹⁹ Moreover, we have many *aṭars*, in addition to the one quoted above, that would support such an attribution.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ For the Twelvers, see Ġaʿfar as-Subḥānī, *Ṣalāt at-tarāwīḥ bayna as-sunnah wa-l-bidʿah* (Qom: Muʿassasat al-Imām aṣ-Šādiq, n.d.); for the Zaydīs, see ʿAbd Allāh ibn Miftāḥ, *K. al-Muntazaʿ al-muḥtār min al-ġayt al-midrār al-mufattiḥ li-kamāʿim “al-Azhār fī fiqh al-aʿimmah al-aṭḥār,”* being a commentary on Ibn al-Murtaḍā’s *Azhār* (Ṣanʿā: Maṭbaʿat al-Maʾāhid al-ʿIlmiyyah, 1923), 1:284-5.

⁹⁸ See Abū Ġānim Bišr b. Ġānim al-Ḥurāsānī, *al-Mudawwanah al-kubrā*, commented upon by Muḥammad b. Yūsuf Aṭṭafayyīš, ed. Muṣṭafā b. Šāliḥ Baġū (Muscat: Wizārat at-Turāt wa-t-Taḳāfah, 2007), 1:502.

⁹⁹ Cf. Hossein Modarressi, “Common Ibādī/Shīʿite Legacy: Examples from the Ritual Law,” in *Ibadi Jurisprudence: Origins, Developments and Cases*, ed. Barbara Michalak-Pikulska and Reinhard Eisener (Hildesheim, Zurich, and New York: Olms, 2015), 111-120. Modarressi focuses on prayer practices common between Ibādīs and Šīʿites, suggesting a quite early date for these practices. My argument is that since nobody claims that *ṣalātu t-tarāwīḥ* was a prophetic practice, the difference between Ibādīs and Šīʿites might suggest that the practice was initiated by ʿUmar indeed, given that for the Ibādīs, unlike the Šīʿites, ʿUmar’s practice is considered authoritative. Of course, such an argument should be understood as a supportive, rather than a conclusive, one.

¹⁰⁰ See a collection of these *aṭars* in Muḥammad Nāṣir ad-Dīn al-Albānī, *Ṣalāt at-tarāwīḥ*, 2nd ed. (Beirut and Damascus: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1985), 41-64.

Medieval scholars dealt with *bid'ah* in this *aṭar* in two different ways, which correspond to whether they accept the distinction between praised and censured *bid'ah* or not. On the one hand, we have Ibn Taymiyyah and his school, with some other notable individuals from the four legal schools, who reject such a distinction; on the other, we have the mainstream scholars from the four legal schools.

Mainstream scholars seem to agree that this *aṭar* is an indication that there may be a praised *bid'ah*. In his commentary on this *aṭar*, Ibn Ḥaḡar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 852/1449) says,

[*Bid'ah*] in legal [discourse] is used as opposed to *sunnah*. In that sense, it is censured. Nevertheless, the proper treatment of the matter is that if [the act classified as *bid'ah*] is embodied under what is considered good in law, then it is good. If, [on the other hand,] it is embodied under what is considered bad in law, then it is bad. Otherwise, it is considered among the permissible section [of acts]. [Thus, we] might [say] that it can acquire any of the five values.¹⁰¹

This is a clear illustration of what we called earlier the ahistorical tendency among medieval scholars to synthesize the different strands that they inherited.¹⁰² The first part of Ibn Ḥaḡar's comment is what we will be dealing with in the next chapter. The second part undermines the first part and makes *bid'ah* conceptually irrelevant. But if *bid'ah* is irrelevant,

¹⁰¹ “*Wa-tuṭlaqu fi š-šarʿi fi muqābili s-sunnati fa-takūnu maḍmūmatan wa-t-taḥqīqu anna-hā in kānat mim-mā tandariḡu taḥta mustaḥsanin fi š-šarʿi fa-hiya ḥasanatun wa-in kānat mim-mā tandariḡu taḥta mustaqbaḥin fi š-šarʿi fa-hiya mustaqbaḥatun wa-illā fa-hiya min qismi l-mubāḥi wa-qad tanqasimu ila l-aḥkāmī l-ḥamsah;*” Šihāb ad-Dīn ibn Ḥaḡar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Fatḥ al-bārī bi-šarḥ “Šaḥīḥ” al-imām Abī ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl al-Buḡārī*, 3rd ed., ed. Muḥibb ad-Dīn al-Ḥaṭīb, ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ibn Bāz, and Muḥammad Fuʿād ʿAbd al-Bāqī (Cairo: al-Maktabah as-Salafiyyah, 1987), 4:253. “The five values (*al-aḥkāmū l-ḥamsah*)” in Islamic law refer to the values that acts assume. They are: the obligatory, the recommendable, the permissible, the detested, and the prohibited.

¹⁰² See p. 52 above.

then this *aṭar* is not problematic. As we shall see in the next chapter, what is more problematic for the mainstream scholars is the categorical condemnation of *bid'ah* that can be found in several *ḥadīṭs*. For these scholars, those *ḥadīṭs* are the ones that should be brought to harmony with 'Umar's *aṭar* on *bid'ah*.

Ibn Taymiyyah, on the other hand, dismissed the idea that this *aṭar* may suggest that there can be a good *bid'ah* by saying:

There is nothing in this [*aṭar* of which our opponents can make use in their argumentation] other than [the fact] that 'Umar called this a *bid'ah* despite its being good. But this is a linguistic naming and not a legal (*ṣar'ī*) [i.e., technical] one. For *bid'ah* linguistically includes all what is being done without an earlier example to follow. As for *bid'ah* legally, it [includes only acts] in support of which no legal evidence can be adduced.¹⁰³

According to Ibn Taymiyyah, there is a prophetic *ḥadīṭ* that suggests that the congregational *ṣalātu t-tarāwīḥ* is a practice that the prophet himself had initiated, but then he decided to quit. So, he did not come to the mosque on the third or fourth night, and commented later by saying,

Nothing has prevented me from joining you except that I was afraid that it might become obligatory on you. So, pray in your homes, for the best prayer is the one that one performs in his home, except for the [five] obligatory prayer[s].¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ “*Aktaru mā fī ḥādā tasmiyatū ‘Umar tilka bid’atan ma’a ḥusniḥā wa-ḥādihī tasmiyatun luḡawiyyatun lā tasmiyatun ṣar’iyyatun wa-dālika anna l-bid’ata fī l-luḡati ta’ummu kulla mā fu’ila btidā’an min ḡayri miṭālin sābiqin wa-amma l-bid’atu ṣ-ṣar’iyyatu fa-mā lam yadulla ‘alay-hi dalilun ṣar’iyy;*” Abū al-‘Abbās Taqī ad-Dīn ibn Taymiyyah, *Iqtidā’ aṣ-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm li-muḥālafat aṣḥāb al-ḡaḥīm*, 7th ed., ed. Nāṣir ‘Abd al-Karīm al-‘Aql (Beirut: Dār ‘Ālam al-Kutub, 1999), 2:95.

¹⁰⁴ “*Inna-hū lam yamna’nī an aḥruḡa ilay-kum illā karahata an tufrāḡa ‘alay-kum fa-ṣallū fī buyūtikum fa-inna afḍala ṣalāti l-mar’i fī baytihi illa l-maktūbah;*” Ibn Taymiyyah, *Iqtidā’*, 2:97. The *ḥadīṭ* can be found with minor variations in: Mālik, *Muwatṭa’*, §299; ‘Abd ar-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, §§4723, 7746-7; Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, §§25876, 25960, 26011, 26481-2, 26838; Buḥārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, §§729, 924, 1129, 2011-2; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, §§1733-

By explicitly stating the reason he decided to quit the congregational *ṣalātu t-tarāwīḥ*, the prophet was in fact authorizing this practice after his death, for then, after his death, no act can become obligatory if it was not so at his time. Thus, we do not have here a legal *bid'ah*, since the act is supported by a prophetic *ḥadīth*.¹⁰⁵

Ibn Taymiyyah's position is problematic at two different accounts. First, the *ḥadīth* mentioned cannot be used to support it. Although Ibn Taymiyyah quotes the two parts of the *ḥadīth*, he uses only the first. When the first part is read alone, one might understand from it, as Ibn Taymiyyah certainly does, that the prophet was afraid if he made it his habit to pray this prayer in the mosque, that God might promote this action from being a merely recommended act to an obligatory one. Nevertheless, the second part suggests a different line of reasoning. The prophet is effectively arguing that since obligatory prayers are to be done in the mosque, while recommended prayers at homes, and since this prayer is recommended, it follows that if he continued praying it in the mosque, it should (or could) be considered an obligatory prayer. The two premises of this argument are still valid after the prophet's death. Thus, claiming that the *ḥadīth* is authorizing this practice after his death seems to be a self-serving misreading.

4; Abū Dāwūd Sulaymān b. al-Aṣ'at̃ as-Siġistānī, *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, ed. Šu'ayb al-Arnā'ūṭ and Muḥammad Kāmil Qurrah Balilī (Beirut: Dār ar-Risālah al-Ālamiyyah, 2009), §§1373-4; an-Nasā'ī, *Sunan*, 3:202. Interestingly, the common link in most of these sources is az-Zuhrī, who narrated the *ḥadīth* on the authority of 'Urwah b. az-Zubayr.

¹⁰⁵ Ibn Taymiyyah, *Iqtidā'*, 2:97. Zayn ad-Dīn ibn Raġab al-Ḥanbalī (d. 795/1393) has a similar line of argument also, but it might have been taken from Ibn Taymiyyah; see his *Ġāmi' al-'ulūm wa-l-ḥikam fī šarḥ ḥamsīn ḥadīṭan min ġawāmi' al-kalim*, ed. Māhir Yāsīn al-Faḥl (Damascus and Beirut: Dār Ibn Kaṭīr, 2008), 783-5.

Secondly, by claiming that the prophet started praying this prayer in the mosque, and then stopped doing so, and by defining the *bid'ah* linguistically in the manner he did, Ibn Taymiyyah should have concluded that this is not linguistically a *bid'ah*. After all, there is a previous example for 'Umar's decision.

Being aware of this problem, aš-Šāṭibī (d. 790/1388), who was among the few Mālikī scholars who rejected the idea of a good *bid'ah*, responded by saying,

[‘Umar] called it *bid'ah* by considering the apparent state [of things]. For the prophet, peace be upon him, had left it, and then, coincidentally it did not occur in the reign of Abū Bakr, may God be pleased with him. [This is] not [to say] that it has the meaning of a [linguistic] *bid'ah*. Who calls it a *bid'ah* by this consideration [is not mistaken], for matters of name conventions should not be contested.¹⁰⁶

Aš-Šāṭibī here distinguishes within the realm of linguistic *bid'ah* between what can be called *bid'ah* literally, and what can be called so “by considering the apparent state [of things] (*ẓāhir al-ḥāl*).” A better expression of the latter category is that that is adopted by Ibn ‘Uṭaymīn, a modern follower of Ibn Taymiyyah. He introduces the term “relative (*nisbiyyah*) *bid'ah*.” Thus, the congregational *ṣalātu t-tarāwīḥ* is considered linguistically a *bid'ah* relative to the fact that it was not practiced when 'Umar (re-)initiated it.¹⁰⁷ In all cases, the first problem of Ibn Taymiyyah's analysis remains unsolved.

¹⁰⁶ “Inna-mā sammāhā bid'atan bi-‘tibāri ẓāhiri l-ḥālī min ḥaytu tarakahā rasūlu l-Lāhi ʿalla l-Lāhu ‘alay-hi wa-sallama wa-ttafaqa an lam taqa‘ fi zamāni Abī Bakrin raḍiya l-Lāhu ‘an-hu lā anna-hā bid'atun fi l-ma‘nā fa-man sammāhā bid'atan bi-hāḍā li-‘tibāri fa-lā mušāḥḥata fi l-asāmī;” Aš-Šāṭibī, *I’tisām*, 1:332.

¹⁰⁷ Muḥammad b. Šāliḥ al-‘Uṭaymīn, *Šarḥ “Riyāḍ aš-ṣāliḥīn min kalām sayyid al-mursalin”* (Riyadh: Dār al-Waṭan, 2005), 2:286-7.

The two treatments of the *aṭar*, that of Ibn Ḥaḡar and mainstream scholars and that of aš-Šāṭibī and Ibn Taymiyyah and his school, are problematic as we have seen. The first because it deems *bid'ah* irrelevant, and this, as we shall see in the next chapter, cannot be the case. The second because while it accepts that the congregational *ṣalātu t-tarāwīḥ* is a recommended practice, it cannot establish that given its theoretical foundations. Denying that the congregational *ṣalātu t-tarāwīḥ* is a recommended practice is unthought of given that this might involve a condemnation of 'Umar.

Our treatment shall start from a simple observation. The *aṭar* is narrated only through the following chain of transmitters: az-Zuhrī—'Urwah b. az-Zubayr—'Abd ar-Raḥmān al-Qārī. The word *bid'ah* and its cognates do not appear in any other narration that involves either 'Urwah or 'Abd ar-Raḥmān. As for az-Zuhrī, they appear in three *aṭars* in addition to the one under investigation, two of which are attributed to az-Zuhrī himself, and the third to Mu'āwiyah b. Abī Sufyān (d. 60/680), but narrated on the authority of az-Zuhrī.

Let us start by examining Mu'āwiyah's *aṭar*. It is narrated on the authority of az-Zuhrī that Mu'āwiyah once commented on a trick that he used during the first Islamic civil war:

I have never *ibtada'tu* a trick sweeter for my taste than a trick with which I tricked Qays b. Sa'd, when he was [the governor of Egypt] representing 'Alī.¹⁰⁸

The verb *ibtada'a* here is surely not used in the technical sense. It can be understood to mean inventing as the tradition says, but it can also mean acting independently as we have

¹⁰⁸ “*Ma btada'tu min makīdatin qaṭṭu a'daba 'indī min makīdatin kāyadtu bi-hā Qaysa bna Sa'din min qibali 'Aliyy;*” 'Abd ar-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, §9770.

suggested. Nevertheless, the Arabic verb that is more widely used in these contexts is *raʿā* (to see), which is usually translated as having a personal opinion,¹⁰⁹ which is in line of our understanding of *ibtadaʿa* as acting or choosing independently.

The second *aṭar* is a legal verdict attributed to az-Zuhrī:

He who drinks in Ramadan: if he has *ibtadaʿa* a religion other than Islam, he should be called upon to repent [and then would be killed if he does not repent]; however, if he is [just] a sinful man, he should be lashed, punished severely, shown around, and denounced publicly.¹¹⁰

It is clear that the religion mentioned cannot be the invention of the accused. The structure of “*ibtadaʿa* a religion” is similar to that of “*ibtadaʿa* a monasticism.” In a similar fashion, *ibtadaʿa* here means acting independently upon something, and in this case upon the precepts of a religion other than Islam, or simply choosing a religion other than Islam. The independency here reflects the idea that the accused is leaving the community of the Muslims. But, like the previous *aṭar*, it is related here to matters of opinion.

In the third *aṭar*, az-Zuhrī seems to be using *bidʿah* in its strictly technical sense:

[Being satisfied with the testimony of one witness if he swears in a court setting] is a *bidʿah*. The first one who used it in passing judgments was Muʿāwiyah.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ More on the later technical use of the term in chapter five.

¹¹⁰ “*Man šariba fī Ramaḍāna fa-in kāna btadaʿa dinan ġayra l-islāmi stutība wa-in kāna fāsiqan mina l-fussāqi ġulida wa-nukkila wa-tuwwifa wa-summiʿa bi-h;*” ‘Abd ar-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, §17045.

¹¹¹ “*Hiya bidʿatun wa-awwalu man qaḍā bi-hā Muʿāwiyah;*” Ibn Abī Šaybah, *Muṣannaf*, §§23637, 36923.

The issue referred to in this *aṭar* will be dealt with later,¹¹² as it deserves a special treatment being one of the earliest instances where the technical *bidʿah* was applied. What is of our concern here is az-Zuhri’s alleged technical use of *bidʿah*. Nevertheless, when we search for other versions of this *aṭar* we find the following:

This [i.e., being satisfied with the testimony of one witness if he swears in a court setting,] is something that people have invented (*aḥḍaṭahu n-nās*). [Having] two witnesses is a must.¹¹³

Interestingly, az-Zuhri here does not use the term *ibtadaʿa*, but rather *aḥḍaṭa*. It is quite possible then to assume that narrators might have replaced the former for the latter, given that the two terms became synonymous as we shall see in the next chapter. Moreover, reports indicate that when acting as a judge, az-Zuhri used to accept the one-witness testimony.¹¹⁴ If this is true, then az-Zuhri seems to be reporting a mere fact about the historical development of the practice, and not giving a legal opinion about it. Thus, the “is” in “Having two witnesses is a must” could easily have been a “was”.

The absence of the word *bidʿah* in the *ḥadīṭs* and *aṭars* narrated by az-Zuhri except for these few instances is significant in itself. Significant also is the fact that in the first two

¹¹² See pp. 132, 136 below.

¹¹³ “*Hāḍā šayʿun aḥḍaṭahu n-nāsu lā budda min šāhidayn*,” Abū ʿUmar Yūsuf ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, *al-Istīḍkār al-ġāmiʿ li-maḍāhib fuqahāʾ al-amṣār wa-ʿulamāʾ al-aqṭār fī-mā taḍammanahū “al-Muwāṭṭa” min maʿānī ar-raʾy wa-l-āṭār wa-šarḥ ḍālika kullihī bi-l-iḡāz wa-li-ḥtišār*, 2nd ed., ed. Sālim Muḥammad ʿAṭā and Muḥammad ʿAlī Muʿawwaḍ (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 2002), 7:112. Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr (d. 463/1070) states ʿAbd ar-Razzāq (d. 211/827) as his source, who reportedly narrates it on the authority of Maʿmar (d. 153/770); nevertheless, I was not able to find this *aṭar* in the published *Muṣannaḥ* of ʿAbd ar-Razzāq.

¹¹⁴ Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, *Istīḍkār*, 7:112.

of the supporting *aṭars*, az-Zuhrī seems to be using *bidʿah* in the linguistic sense that we are suggesting; while in the third, it seems that he did not use the term after all. Could it be that az-Zuhrī has no conception of the technical *bidʿah*? Our line of argument suggests so. Although it is an *argumentum ex silentio*, it has some merit, given, on the one hand, how prolific az-Zuhrī was, and his central role in the transmission and writing *ḥadīth*, and on the other hand, the centrality of *bidʿah* in Islamic thought.

What ʿUmar meant when he said, “What an excellent *bidʿah* this is!”, if he ever said that, cannot be known in certainty. Nevertheless, az-Zuhrī is the one responsible for circulating this *aṭar*. If he had no conception of the technical *bidʿah*, then he must have understood the term in its linguistic sense. A possible translation would be, “What an excellent opinion with which I independently came up!” Ibn Taymiyyah seems to be right after all, provided that the linguistic *bidʿah* is understood in the way we are suggesting. But then the real problem is that the *aṭar* is using the linguistic *bidʿah* to speak of an act that, by all means, should be considered an instance of the technical *bidʿah*. Like the Qurʾānic verse on monasticism, this *aṭar* is silent about the *bidʿah* being a *bidʿah* in the technical sense. Similarly, the very fact that the *aṭar* uses *bidʿah* in its linguistic sense when speaking of a technical *bidʿah* becomes an evidence for the absence of this category within the *aṭar*’s framework; a result that would certainly not satisfy Ibn Taymiyyah.

* * * * *

In the first section of this chapter I have argued successfully, I hope, that the “original” linguistic sense of *bidʿah* is not related to invention or innovation as much as it is related to uniqueness and independence. This is not to say that the term did not acquire the sense

of innovation later, but rather that this was due mainly to the development of the technical sense of the word in the manner that I will be discussing in the coming chapters.

In the second section, I examined three early religious texts that are related to *bid'ah* or use the term. In two of these texts, the term is used in its linguistic sense to refer to practices that clearly qualify to be considered *bid'ahs* in the technical sense. However, the texts, rather than condemning these practices, endorse them. In the third text, the term “bad *sunnah*” is used to refer to the technical *bid'ah*. What is striking about the three texts is that they are incompatible with the technical *bid'ah* framework, where *bid'ah* is contrasted with the prophetic *sunnah*, and condemned categorically. That these texts include a Qur'ānic verse indicates that the emergence of the technical *bid'ah* is post-Qur'ānic, to say the least, as is the emergence of the technical sense of the term *sunnah*.

CHAPTER THREE

THE EMERGENCE OF TECHNICAL *BID'AH*

In the previous chapter, I showed that *bid'ah* as a term used in pre-Islamic and very early Islamic Arabic carried neither the sense of novelty and innovation, nor the negative value associated with the technical term. Moreover, I showed that in some early attestations of the term in the religious discourse, it could hardly be contrasted to *sunnah*. In this chapter, I will study a cluster of texts where, on the one hand, such contrast can be attested, and *bid'ah* is clearly conceived in negative terms, but, on the other hand, the sense of novelty is still missing. I argue, in opposition to the traditional common understanding, that *bid'ah* in these texts was still used in its linguistic sense of uniqueness, or, more specifically, in the sense of independent action or judgment. In the previous chapter, we saw 'Umar I reportedly using the term in that sense to describe his initiation of *tarāwīḥ* prayer. The texts in this chapter, however, reveal a shift in understanding the nature of independence; here, the action or judgment is named *bid'ah* when it is perceived to be taken or conducted independently from practices set either by political authorities, as the Syrian usage would suggest, or by the Muslim community at large, as the Iraqi usage would. In both cases, a contrast with *sunnah* is established, reflecting the emergence of two conceptions of *sunnah*. We will proceed now by examining thoroughly two key texts that represent these two understandings of *bid'ah*.

I. The Ḥadīṭ of al-ʿIrbād b. Sāriyah

The ḥadīṭ that I will be discussing in this section is narrated on the authority of al-ʿIrbād b. Sāriyah, who reportedly said,

One day the Messenger of God led us in prayer, then faced us and gave us a lengthy exhortation at which the eyes shed tears and the hearts were afraid. A man said: “Messenger of God! It seems as if it were a farewell exhortation, so what injunction do you give us?” He then said: “I enjoin you to fear God, and to hear and obey even if it be an Abyssinian slave, for those of you who live after me will see great disagreement. You must then follow my tradition (*sunnatī*) and that of the rightly-guided caliphs. Hold to it and stick fast to it. Avoid *muḥḍaṭāt* matters, for every *muḥḍaṭah* is a *bidʿah*, and every *bidʿah* is an error.”¹

¹ “*Ṣallā la-nā rasūlu l-Lāhi ṣalla l-Lāhu ʿalay-hi wa-sallama l-fağra tumma aqbala ʿalaynā fa-waʿāzanā mawʿizatan balīğatan ɗarafat la-ha l-aʿyunu wa-wağilat minha l-qulūbu qulnā aw qālū yā rasūla l-Lāhi kaʿanna ḥādīhī mawʿizatu muwaddīʿin fa-awṣinā qāla uṣikum bi-taqwa l-Lāhi wa-s-samʿi wa-ṭ-ṭāʿati wa-in kāna ʿabdan ḥabaṣiyyan fa-inna-hū man yaʿiṣ min-kum yara baʿdiya ḥtilāfan kaṭīran fa-ʿalay-kum bi-sunnatī wa-sunnati l-ḥulafāʾi r-rāsīdīna l-mahdiyyīna wa-ʿaḍḍū ʿalay-hā bi-n-nawāğīdi wa-iyyākum wa-muḥḍaṭātī l-umūri fa-inna kulla muḥḍaṭatin bidʿatun wa-inna kulla bidʿatin ḍalālah;*” Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad al-imām Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal*, ed. Abū al-Maʿāṭi an-Nūrī et. al. (Beirut: ʿĀlam al-Kutub, 1998), §17274. Different versions of the ḥadīṭ appear also in Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, §§17272, 17274-7; Ibn Mağāḥ Muḥammad al-Qazwīnī, *as-Sunan*, ed. Šuʿayb al-Arnāʾuṭ (Damascus: Dār ar-Risālah al-ʿĀlamiyyah, 2009), §42-4; Abū Dāwūd Sulaymān b. al-Aṣʿaṭ as-Siğistānī, *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, ed. Šuʿayb al-Arnāʾuṭ and Muḥammad Kāmil Qurrah Balilī (Beirut: Dār ar-Risālah al-ʿĀlamiyyah, 2009), §4607; Abū ʿIsā at-Tirmidī, *al-Ğāmiʿ al-kabīr: Sunan at-Tirmidī*, ed. Šuʿayb al-Arnāʾuṭ and ʿAbd al-Laṭīf Ħirz Allāh (Beirut: Dār ar-Risālah al-ʿĀlamiyyah, 2010), §2676; Abū Bakr ibn Abī ʿĀṣim, *K. as-Sunnah*, ed. Muḥammad Nāṣir ad-Dīn al-Albānī (Beirut and Damascus: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1980), §§26-34, 48-9, 54-7, 59, 1037-45; Muḥammad b. Waḍḍāḥ al-Qurṭubī, *al-Bidaʿ wa-n-nahy ʿan-hā*, ed. ʿAmr ʿAbd al-Munʿim Salīm (Cairo: Maktabat Ibn Taymiyyah, AH 1416), §§57, 76; Abū Ğaʿfar aṭ-Ṭaḥāwī, *Šarḥ muškil al-aṭār*, ed. Šuʿayb al-Arnāʾuṭ (Beirut: Muʿassasat ar-Risālah, 1994), §§1185-7; Abū al-Qāsim aṭ-Ṭabarānī, *Al-Muʿgam al-kabīr*, 2nd ed., ed. Ḥamdī ʿAbd al-Mağīd as-Salafī (Cairo: Maktabat Ibn Taymiyyah, 1983), 18:§§617-624, 642; Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Ḥākim, *al-Mustadrak ʿalā ʿaṣ-Ṣaḥīḥayn*, ed. Muṣṭafā ʿAbd al-Qādir ʿAṭā (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 1990), §§329-33. The ḥadīṭ appears also in a few other sources but using the same *sanads* that are found in the mentioned sources.

While different parts of this *ḥadīṭ* appear in other traditions, it is only here that we have a mention of the *sunnah* that includes the *sunnah* of the caliphs. Furthermore, the last sentence on *bidʿah* appear only here and in another *ḥadīṭ* that we will study later.²

Muḥdatah is understood by Muslim scholars to mean innovation;³ so is *bidʿah*. Thus, the last sentence can be rendered as follows: “every innovation is an innovation, and every innovation is an error.” To avoid the ridiculousness of this translation, one can render either *muḥdatah* or *bidʿah* as “invention” or “novelty,” preserving “innovation” for the other term. This might solve the problem in English, but it is an ad hoc solution. Our commentators do not provide us with a clear distinction between the two terms.

Moreover, that *muḥdatah* and *bidʿah* are understood to be synonymous is not the only difficulty that faces the reader of this *ḥadīṭ*. Many Muslim scholars understood “the rightly-guided caliphs” to be referring to the first four caliphs in Islam.⁴ But if this is the

² See p. 171 below.

³ See, e.g., Abū al-ʿUlā al-Mubārakfūrī, *Tuḥfah al-aḥwādī bi-ṣarḥ “Ġāmiʿ” at-Tirmidī* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 1990), 7:367-8; Šams al-Ḥaqq al-ʿAẓīm Ābādī, *ʿAwn al-maʿbūd ṣarḥ “Sunan” Abī Dāwūd*, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 2009), 12:235; Abū al-Ḥasan as-Sindī, *Šarḥ “Sunan” Ibn Māğah [=Ḥašiyah]* (Beirut: Dār al-Ġīl, n.d.), 1:19.

⁴ This is taken for granted by most scholars. The reader can refer to standard commentaries on the *ḥadīṭ*, since it appears in three of the six canonical books; see, e.g., al-Mubārakfūrī, *Tuḥfah al-aḥwādī*, 7:367-8; al-ʿAẓīm Ābādī, *ʿAwn al-maʿbūd*, 12:235; as-Sindī, *Šarḥ “Sunan” Ibn Māğah*, 1:19. While interpreting the phrase to be referring to the first four caliphs is clearly a retrospective interpretation, the scholars managed to find a *ḥadīṭ* that supports their claim. It is reported on the authority of Saḥīnah, the companion, that the prophet has said, “Caliphate [will last for] thirty years” (*al-ḥilāfatu ʿalā talaṭūna ʿāmā*); Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, §22264. The *ḥadīṭ* appears also with minor variations in Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, §§22268, 22273; Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, §§4646-7; at-Tirmidī, *Ġāmiʿ*, §2226. Saʿīd b. Ġumhān, the common link in the different *isnāds*, said that he stayed at Saḥīnah’s place eight days during the era of al-Ḥağğāğ b. Yūsuf at-Taqaḥī, the infamous

case, then the *sunnah* of these caliphs was yet to be established when the prophet allegedly referred Muslims to it. In that sense, this *sunnah* must have been understood to involve innovations that these caliphs would undertake. Muslim scholars try to solve the paradox by claiming that the *sunnah* of the caliphs is not independent from the *sunnah* of the prophet. The role of their *sunnah* is only to elucidate that of the prophet. This is why some scholars understood “the rightly-guided caliphs” to be referring to scholars (*‘ulamā*) in general, including the first four caliphs but in their capacity as scholars, being the disseminators of the prophetic *sunnah*.⁵

Nevertheless, an analysis of the *ḥadīṭ*’s *sanads* (chains of transmitters) shows that the common understanding of the *ḥadīṭ* is quite unlikely. Even if the *ḥadīṭ* can be traced back to the prophet himself as alleged, the wording is that of the time and place of circulation. This means that the words of the *ḥadīṭ* should be understood to signify what they signified at that time and place rather than that of the prophet. It is crucial then to establish first the place and time of circulation.

By examining all available works in which this *ḥadīṭ* appears, we find that this tradition is said to be narrated on the authority of ‘Irbād b. Sāriyah by eight narrators:

1- ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān as-Sulamī, and on his authority by four narrators:

governor of Iraq for the Umayyads, and that Saḥīnah, making claims against the Umayyads, narrated to him *exclusively* this *ḥadīṭ* among other *ḥadīṭ*s; Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, §22273. I leave the rest to the reader’s imagination.

⁵ See, e.g., Sindī, *Ḥāṣiyah*, 1:19, where this interpretation is given as an alternative one.

- a- Ḥālid b. Ma'dān (Ḥ), and on his authority by three narrators: Ṭawr b. Yazīd (Ṭ), Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm b. al-Ḥārīt at-Taymī (M), and Baḥīr b. Sa'd (B);⁶
- b- Yaḥyā b. Ġābir aṭ-Ṭā'ī, and on his authority by Sulaymān b. Sulaym;⁷
- c- Ḍamrah b. Ḥabīb, and on his authority by Mu'āwiyah b. Ṣālih;⁸
- d- and 'Awf al-A'rābī, and on his authority by 'Ikrimah b. 'Ammār;⁹
- 2- Ḥuġr b. Ḥuġr al-Kulā'ī, and on his authority by Ḥālid b. Ma'dān (Ḥ), and on the latter authority by Ṭawr b. Yazīd (Ṭ);¹⁰
- 3- Ġubayr b. Nufayr, and on his authority by Ḥālid b. Ma'dān (Ḥ), and on the latter authority by Ṣa'wad al-Azdī;¹¹
- 4- Yaḥyā b. Abī al-Muṭā', and on his authority by 'Abd Allāh b. al-'Alā' b. Zabīr;¹²

⁶ Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, §17274-5; Ibn Māḡah, *Sunan*, §44; Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, §4607; at-Tirmidī, *Ġāmi'*, §2676; Ibn Abī 'Āṣim, *Sunnah*, §31-2, 54, 57; aṭ-Ṭaḡāwī, *Muṣkil*, §§1185-6; aṭ-Ṭabarānī, *al-Mu'ḡam al-kabīr*, 18:§618; al-Ḥākim, *Mustadrak*, §§329-30, 332.

⁷ Ibn Abī 'Āṣim, *Sunnah*, §30; Ibn Waḍḍāḡ, *Bida'*, §57; aṭ-Ṭabarānī, *al-Mu'ḡam al-kabīr*, 18:§620.

⁸ Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, §17272; Ibn Māḡah, *Sunan*, §43; aṭ-Ṭabarānī, *al-Mu'ḡam al-kabīr*, 18:§619; al-Ḥākim, *Mustadrak*, §331.

⁹ Aṭ-Ṭaḡāwī, *Muṣkil*, §1187. This report does not mention the name of the companion, i.e., al-'Irbād; but it states rather that as-Sulamī heard the *ḥadīth* from “a man” (*raġul*).

¹⁰ Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, §17275; Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, §4607; Ibn Abī 'Āṣim, *Sunnah*, §32, 57; al-Ḥākim, *Mustadrak*, §332.

¹¹ Ibn Abī 'Āṣim, *Sunnah*, §§34, 49; aṭ-Ṭabarānī, *al-Mu'ḡam al-kabīr*, 18:§642.

¹² Ibn Māḡah, *Sunan*, §42; aṭ-Ṭabarānī, *al-Mu'ḡam al-kabīr*, 18:§622; al-Ḥākim, *Mustadrak*, §333.

- 5- Muhāṣir b. Ḥabīb, and on his authority by Arṭa'ah b. al-Munḍir;¹³
- 6- 'Abd ar-Raḥmān b. Abī Bilāl, and on his authority by Ḥālid b. Ma'dān (Ḥ), and on the latter authority by Baḥīr b. Sa'd (B) and Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm b. al-Ḥārīt;¹⁴
- 7- the uncle of Ḥālid b. Ma'dān, and on his authority by Ḥālid b. Ma'dān (Ḥ), and on the latter authority by Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm b. al-Ḥārīt (M);¹⁵
- 8- and Ḥālid b. Ma'dān (Ḥ), and on his authority by two narrators: Baḥīr b. Sa'd (B), and Abū Bakr b. 'Abd Allāh b. Abī Maryam.¹⁶

All *sanads* except for five (1b, 1c, 1d, 4, and 5) run through Ḥālid b. Ma'dān (Ḥ). It seems that Ḥālid b. Ma'dān (Ḥ) narrated the *ḥadīth* on the authority of 'Abd ar-Raḥmān as-Sulamī (1a) only. Ḥuḡr (2) only appears in association with 'Abd ar-Raḥmān, in an *isnād* that runs as follows: Ṭawr (Ṭ)—Ḥālid b. Ma'dān (Ḥ)—both 'Abd ar-Raḥmān and Ḥuḡr. But if we know that four narrators narrate this *ḥadīth* on the authority of Ṭawr (Ṭ) with this *isnād*,¹⁷ and that none but one, who is al-Walīd b. Muslim, mentions Ḥuḡr, then

¹³ Ibn Abī 'Āṣim, *Sunnah*, §§28, 29, 59, 1043; aṭ-Ṭabarānī, *al-Mu'ḡam al-kabīr*, 18:§623.

¹⁴ Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, §§17276-7; Aṭ-Ṭabarānī, *al-Mu'ḡam al-kabīr*, 18:§624.

¹⁵ Aṭ-Ṭabarānī, *al-Mu'ḡam al-kabīr*, 18:§621.

¹⁶ Ibn Waḍḍāḥ, *Bida'*, §76.

¹⁷ These are al-Walīd b. Muslim, Abū 'Āṣim aḍ-Ḍaḥḥāk, 'Isā b. Yūnus, and 'Abd al-Malik b. aṣ-Ṣabbāḥ. The names are taken from the sources mentioned in n. 6, p. 70, and n. 10, p. 70 above.

we can assume that adding Ḥuġr was a mistake committed, most probably, by al-Walid.¹⁸ Naming Ġubayr (3) among the narrators must have been a mistake by Šaʿwaḍ al-Azdī, for we have three other narrators narrating this *ḥadīth* on the authority of his very source, i.e. Ḥālid b. Maʿdān (Ḥ), and all agree that Ḥālid's source was ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān as-Sulamī (1a). ʿAbd ar-Raḥman b. Abī Bilāl (6) seems to be a mistake caused by sharing the same first name with as-Sulamī. The uncle of Ḥālid b. Maʿdān (7) seems also to be as-Sulamī.¹⁹ That Ḥālid b. Maʿdān (Ḥ) narrated this *ḥadīth* directly from al-ʿIrbāḍ (8) seems to be a mistake, especially that one of the narrators mentioned in (8) narrated the *ḥadīth* in (1a) on the authority of as-Sulamī through Ḥālid b. Maʿdān (Ḥ).

We are left with only two *sanads* (4 and 5) that run neither through Ḥālid b. Maʿdān (Ḥ), nor through ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān as-Sulamī. As for Yaḥyā (4), several biographers doubt that he heard from al-ʿIrbāḍ directly,²⁰ so we would not be wrong if we assume that there was an intercessor between them (probably ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān as-Sulamī directly or through

¹⁸ This is given the fact that al-Walid is known to commit many mistakes in narrating *ḥadīth*, including conflating different *ḥadīths* and adding narrators to *sanads*; see Ġamāl ad-Dīn al-Mizzī, *Taḥḍīb al-kamāl fī asmaʿ ar-riġāl*, ed. Baššār Awwād Maʿrūf (Beirut: Muʿassasat ar-Risālah, 1980), 31:540-1.

¹⁹ Cf. Šihāb ad-Dīn ibn Ḥaġar al-ʿAsqalānī, *K. Taḥḍīb “at-Taḥḍīb”* (Hyderabad Deccan: Dāʿirat al-Maʿārif an-Nizāmiyyah, AH 1325), 6:238.

²⁰ Abū Zurʿah ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān ad-Dimašqī, *Tārīḥ Abī Zurʿah ad-Dimašqī*, ed. Šukr Allāh b. Niʿmat Allāh al-Qawġānī (Damascus: Maġmaʿ al-Luġah al-ʿArabiyyah, n.d.), 1:605. Later biographers quoted Abū Zurʿah with explicit or implicit approval; see Zayn ad-Dīn ibn Raġab al-Ḥanbalī, *Ġāmiʿ al-ʿulūm wa-l-ḥikam fī šarḥ ḥamsīn ḥadīthan min ġawāmiʿ al-kalim*, ed. Māhir Yāsīn al-Faḥl (Damascus and Beirut: Dār Ibn Kaṭīr, 2008), 2:110-1; al-Mizzī, *Taḥḍīb*, 31:540-1; and Šams ad-Dīn ad-Dahabī, *Mizān al-ʿitidāl fī naqd ar-riġāl*, ed. ʿAlī Muḥammad al-Baġāwī (Beirut: Dār al-Maʿrifah, 1963), 4:410.

Ḥālid b. Maʿdān (Ḥ)). As for Muhāṣir b. Ḥabīb (5), there are more than one reason to assume here also an intercessor between al-ʿIrbāḍ and him²¹ (again probably ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān as-Sulamī directly, or through Ḥālid b. Maʿdān (Ḥ), or Ḍamrah b. Ḥabīb, his brother).

The common link of the *ḥadīṭ* is then ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān as-Sulamī. But although four people narrated this *ḥadīṭ* on his authority, it seems that Ḥālid b. Maʿdān (Ḥ) is the one who was responsible for circulating the *ḥadīṭ* widely given that five people narrated it on his authority.²² Ḥālid b. Maʿdān (d. 103/721-2), however, could not have attributed the *ḥadīṭ* haphazardly to ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān (d. 110/728-9), for the latter outlived the former.

²¹ The following facts can be adduced: (1) Muhāṣir died quite late in AD 128; (2) based on my search in most *ḥadīṭ* collections, this is the only *ḥadīṭ* where he narrates on the authority of al-ʿIrbāḍ; and (3) he is the brother of Ḍamrah b. Ḥabīb, mentioned in *sanad* (1c) above, who narrates the *ḥadīṭ* on the authority of as-Sulamī. On Muhāṣir, see ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān ibn Abī Ḥātim, *K. al-Ġarḥ wa-taʿdīl* (Hyderabad Deccan: Dāʾirat al-Maʿārif al-ʿUṭmāniyyah, 1952), 8:439-40; and Abū Ḥātim Muḥammad b. Ḥibbān, *K. at-Tiqāt* (Hyderabad Deccan: Dāʾirat al-Maʿārif al-ʿUṭmāniyyah, 1973-1983), 5:427, 454, 7:525-6.

²² G.H.A. Juynboll considers Ṭawar b. Yazīd, mentioned in *sanad* (1a), to be the one responsible for circulating the *ḥadīṭ*; *Encyclopedia of the Canonical Ḥadīth* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 627-8. His conclusion differs from mine mainly because he confines himself to the six canonical books, while my work uses a much wider range of sources.

By traditional standards, the *ḥadīṭ* should be considered weak,²³ for ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān’s trustworthiness is not verified (*maḡhūlu l-ḥāl*).²⁴ But our concern is different. Here we are interested in dating the time of circulation. Given that most narrators and alleged narrators, including al-‘Irbād, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, and Ḥālid, were from Ḥimṣ, and that al-‘Irbād died in 75/694-5, ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān in 110/728-9, and Ḥālid in 103/721-2, and that al-‘Irbād was already dead when ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān narrated the *ḥadīṭ*, it seems then that the *ḥadīṭ* was put into circulation in Ḥimṣ between 75/694 and 103/722.

This conclusion is significant in determining the meaning of the “rightly-guided caliphs” (*al-ḥulafā’u r-rāšidūna l-mahdiyyūn*) expression. Given the fact that this *ḥadīṭ* is Syrian, and that it was put in circulation during Umayyad era, there is no doubt that it was understood at that time by its narrators to be referring to Umayyad caliphs. In fact, we

²³ Modern mainstream Muslim scholarship on *ḥadīṭ* is dominated by three figures: Šu‘ayb al-Arna’ūṭ, Muḥammad Nāṣir ad-Dīn al-Albānī, and Aḥmad Šākir. Two of these three consider the *ḥadīṭ* to be sound (*ṣaḥīḥ*), namely, Šu‘ayb al-Arna’ūṭ and Muḥammad Nāṣir ad-Dīn al-Albānī; for the former’s opinion, see his footnote on Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad al-imām Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal*, ed. Šu‘ayb al-Arna’ūṭ et. al., under the supervision of ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abd al-Muḥsin at-Turkī (Beirut: Mu‘assasat ar-Risālah, 2001), §17142, n.3; for the latter’s, see his *Silsilat al-aḥādīṭ aṣ-ṣaḥīḥah wa-ṣay’ min fiqhīhā wa-fawā’isihā* (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Ma‘ārif, 1995-2002), §2735. Their argument rests on the multiplicity of its *sanads*. I could not find an opinion for the third, i.e., Aḥmad Šākir. From a traditional perspective, what I find common in the judgments made by the three scholars in general is that they are quite formalistic, overlooking what is known in the science of *ḥadīṭ* as *‘ilal*. Nevertheless, arguing for this is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

²⁴ As a matter of fact, in the six canonical books, ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān as-Sulamī is never mentioned except in the chains of transmitters associated with this *ḥadīṭ* only. On as-Sulamī, see Muḥammad b. Sa’d, *aṭ-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, ed. Iḥsān ‘Abbās (Beirut: Dār Šādir, 1968), 7:449 (where only his death date is mentioned); Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl al-Buḥārī, *K. at-Tārīḥ al-kabīr*, 2nd ed. (Hyderabad Deccan: Dā’irat al-Ma‘ārif al-‘Uṭmāniyyah, 1962), §1032; Abū Zur‘ah, *Tārīḥ*, 606; Ibn Ḥibān, *Tiqāt*, 5:115; al-Mizzī, *Tahḍīb*, 17:304-7; and Ibn Ḥaḡar, *Tahḍīb “at-Tahḍīb,”* 6:238.

have ample evidence that suggest that the term was widely used in the Umayyad era to refer to them.²⁵

The second expression is the “Abyssinian slave” expression. Does this imply that the caliph could be an Abyssinian, not to mention being a slave? This theme of the prophet calling his followers to obey even if an “Abyssinian slave” is in charge is common in several *ḥadīths*.²⁶ The fact that this specific *ḥadīth* is Syrian, and narrated by Ḥālid b. Maʿdān, who was appointed by the Umayyads at some point as the chief of police,²⁷ supports the claim made by B. Lewis, in his comments on Goldziher’s *Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law*, that “the message [this expression] conveys is not equality but obedience.”²⁸ As for the

²⁵ For a list of citations where the terms *rāšid* and/or *mahdī* are applied to Umayyad caliphs, either collectively or individually, see Patricia Crone and Martin Hinds, *God’s Caliph: Religious Authority in the First Centuries of Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 36-37.

²⁶ Two other companions, other than al-ʿIrbād, are said to have narrated similar prophetic guidance; see Abū Bakr ibn Abī Šaybah, *al-Muṣannaḥ*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAwwāmah (Jeddah: Dār al-Qiblah, and Damascus: Muʿassasat ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān, 2006), §§33204-5; Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, §§16763, 16766, 21758, 21833, 21884, 23619, 23622, 27801-2, 27804-5, 27807-8, 27811-13; Muslim b. al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ al-Qušayrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, ed. Muḥammad Fuʾād ʿAbd al-Bāqī (Cairo: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Kutub al-ʿArabiyyah, 1955-6), §§1411, 1483, 3116-7, 4784-9; Ibn Māǧāh, *Sunan*, §§2861-2; Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, §1834; at-Tirmidī, *Ġāmiʿ*, §1706; and Abū ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān an-Nasāʾī, *Sunan an-Nasāʾī*, commentated upon by Ġalāl ad-Dīn as-Suyūṭī and Muḥammad as-Sindī (Cairo: al-Maktabah at-Tiǧāriyyah, 1930), 7:154.

²⁷ It is reported that he was the chief of police (*šaraṭah*) for Yazīd I; Abū Ġaʿfar Muḥammad b. Ġarīr at-Ṭabarī, *al-Muntaḥab min kitāb “Dayl al-muḍayyal min tāriḥ aš-šaḥābah wa-t-tābiʿin,”* in *Tāriḥ at-Ṭabarī: tāriḥ ar-rusul wa-l-mulūk: al-ǧuzʾ al-ḥādī ʿašar*, 2nd ed., ed. Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1967), 632; Abū al-Qāsim ibn ʿAsākir, *Tāriḥ madīnat Dimašq*, ed. ʿAmr b. Ġarāmah al-ʿAmrawī (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1995), 16:189, 194-5.

²⁸ See Ignaz Goldziher, *Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law*, trans. Andras and Ruth Hamori, with an introduction and additional notes by Bernard Lewis (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990),

possibility embedded in the *ḥadīṭ*, one can safely assume that it relates to governors and officials appointed by the state, rather than referring to the head of the state himself.²⁹

Understanding these two expressions is crucial to our understanding of the *bidʿah* and the *muḥḍatah* in the *ḥadīṭ*. The *ḥadīṭ* can be analyzed as consisting of two groups of sentences, each of which consists of three sentences. The second group is in a way a restatement of the first group. In that sense, each group helps us in understanding the other.

Here is a visual arrangement of the *ḥadīṭ*'s structure:

- A I enjoin you to fear God,
- B and to hear and obey even if it be an Abyssinian slave,
- ~A for those of you who live after me will see great disagreement.
- A' You must then follow my *sunnah* and that of the... caliphs...
- ~B Avoid *muḥḍatāt* matters,
- ~A' for every *muḥḍatah* is a *bidʿah*, and every *bidʿah* is an error.

In the first group, the path of God (A) is contrasted with the path that leads to disagreement (~A); similarly, in the second group, the *sunnah* (A') is contrasted with *bidʿah* (~A'). The main message of the first is the duty of obedience (B); the main message of the second is the duty of avoiding *muḥḍatāt* (~B). But if *muḥḍatah* is to be contrasted with obedience,

171n. The note is a comment by Lewis on Goldziher's interpretation of the phrase as revealing Ḥārīḡite tendencies. Goldziher was followed by many scholars; see Patricia Crone, "Even an Ethiopian Slave': The Transformation of a Sunni Tradition," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 57(1994): n.1.

²⁹ This is how traditional commentators interpreted the expression; see al-Mubārakfūrī, *Tuḥfah*, 7:366; al-ʿAẓīm Ābādī, *ʿAwn*, 12:234; and as-Sindī, *Ḥāṣīyah*, 1:20. For a full discussion on the use of this expression in discourses on qualifications for office, see Crone, "Ethiopian," 59-67. Crone argues forcefully also for not taking *ʿabd* in the expression literally; it should be understood, rather, to be referring to color or ethnic background.

then *muḥdaṭāt* must have meant something else other than innovations as the term is commonly understood in *ḥadīṭ* commentaries. Elsewhere, I have argued that a *muḥdaṭah* in this *ḥadīṭ* should be understood as a breach (of the pledge of allegiance) that would result in suspending or revoking the protection rights guaranteed by the ummah.³⁰ In this case, the contrast between (B) and (¬B) is maintained.

How should we understand *bidʿah* in this *ḥadīṭ*? What we know about *bidʿah* from the *ḥadīṭ* is that it is paralleled with disagreement, contrasted with the *sunnah* of the prophet and the caliphs, and considered a genus that encompasses *muḥdaṭāt*. Certainly, innovation can hardly be paralleled with disagreement, or contrasted with *sunnah*, if *sunnah* is understood as the norms established by current authorities. Furthermore, “every breach is an innovation” does not seem to make much sense.

When we understand *bidʿah* as an independent act, as we established in the previous chapter, all these relations start to make sense. When everyone acts independently, disagreement will occur. Moreover, acting independently means that a person would not be bound by the established norms or *sunnah*. As for “every *muḥdaṭah* is a *bidʿah*”, it seems to convey that breaches only occur when independent acting and reasoning are exercised.

What makes al-ʿIrbāḍ’s *ḥadīṭ* significant then is not that it assigns a new meaning to *bidʿah*; for the latter is still in the realm of independent acting. What is significant is that a new value is assigned to it: “every *bidʿah* is an error.” Furthermore, the nature of independence that is inherent in *bidʿah* is now being defined: it is an independence from

³⁰ See pp. 96-113 below, esp. p. 108.

authority control, that is, from the *sunnah* of the caliphs, which is more relevant here than even the *sunnah* of the prophet.

In some versions of the *ḥadīṭ*, the following statement is added:

For the [true] faithful is like a camel with a ring in its nose; wherever it is driven, it complies.³¹

Although this seems to be a later addition to the *ḥadīṭ*, as several scholars have already claimed,³² it is quite revealing, for it shows the way this *ḥadīṭ* was interpreted by those who were responsible for circulating it. It was understood as a *ḥadīṭ* that supports the Umayyad's demands for absolute obedience.³³

II. 'Uṭmān's Inaugural Speech

It is quite unconventional to choose an inaugural speech attributed to an Umayyad as an illustration of an Iraqi discourse. But the particular speech under consideration came to us through an Iraqi channel, and it reflects Iraqi sentiments. This becomes more significant

³¹ "Fa-inna-ma l-mu'minu ka-l-ḡamali l-anifi ḥaytu-mā qīda nqād;" Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, §17272; Ibn Māḡah, *Sunan*, §43; al-Ḥākim, *Mustadrak*, §331 (through Ibn Ḥanbal).

³² Ibn Raḡab, *Ḡāmi'*, 2:110. It is also said that Asad b. Wadā'ah of Ḥimṣ (d. AH 137) is responsible for this addition (al-Ḥākim, *Mustadrak*, §331).

³³ We have mentioned earlier that Ḥālīd b. Ma'dān worked for the Umayyads. We can add here that Asad b. Wadā'ah, mentioned in the previous note, was considered an Umayyad fanatic, or *nāṣibī* as often labeled; al-Mizzī, *Tahḏīb*, 4:427; Šihāb ad-Dīn ibn Ḥaḡar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Lisān "al-Mīzān"*, ed. ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ḡuddah (Beirut: Dār al-Baṣā'ir al-Islāmiyyah, 2002), 2:93. On Umayyad ideology, see Wadad Kadi, "The Religious Foundation of Late Umayyad Ideology and Practice," in *Sober Religioso y Poder Político en el Islam*, ed. Manuela Marín (Madrid: Agencia Espanola de Cooperación Internacional [Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas], 1994), 231-73.

when we consider the other report on the inauguration of ‘Uṭmān (r. 23-35/644-656) narrated on the authority of aṣ-Ṣa‘bī (d. ca. 106/724) and Ibrāhīm b. ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān al-Maḥzūmī (d. ca. 95/714).³⁴ In the latter report, words are said to have failed ‘Uṭmān that he became speechless (*urtiḡa ‘alayh*);³⁵ probably a metaphor for his incompetence in dealing with the events yet to come. Although aṣ-Ṣa‘bī is of Kūfah, he was a supporter of the Umayyads, and is considered by Steven Judd as one of the five “pillars of Umayyad piety.”³⁶ Al-Maḥzūmī, on the other hand, is a Quraṣī, who lived most of his life in Medina.³⁷

Our concern here, however, is with the report narrated by Sayf b. ‘Umar, on the authority of al-Fayḍ b. Muḥammad, who narrated it on the authority of ‘Awn b. ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Utbah. It says that ‘Uṭmān, upon receiving Muslims’ pledge of allegiance, gave the following speech:

I proceed to say, I was entrusted [with the caliphate] and I accepted [this entrust]. Verily, I am a follower and not a *mubtadi‘*. I owe you three things in addition to [duties established by] the book of God and [by] the *sunnah* of His prophet: (1) following who were before me in [matters] which *you* agreed upon, and which *you* established as *sunnahs*; (2)

³⁴ Aṣ-Ṣa‘bī’s report appears first in Abū Muḥammad ibn Qutaybah, *K. ‘Uyūn al-aḥbār* (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyyah, 1925), 2:235; while al-Maḥzūmī’s report in Ibn Sa‘d, *Ṭabaqāt*, 3:62. The report appears then in many other literary works based on these two sources.

³⁵ ‘Uṭmān is said to have justified this by saying that “the first ride is difficult” (*inna awwala markabin ṣa‘b*), and that he is “not made to be an orator, but God will teach” him (*wa-mā kunnā ḥuṭabā’ wa-sayyū‘allimuna l-Lāh*); Ibn Sa‘d, *Ṭabaqāt*, 3:62.

³⁶ Steven C. Judd, *Religious Scholars and the Umayyads: Piety-Minded Supporters of the Marwānid Caliphate* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 41-51.

³⁷ Al-Mizzī, *Tahḏīb*, 2:133-4, and the sources provided by the editor therein.

establishing *sunnahs* the way good people do in [matters in] which you did not collectively establish *sunnahs*; and (3) restraining [myself] from [harming] you except if you do what makes you deserve [punishment]. Verily, this worldly life is pleasant and tender, and it has been made alluring to people, many of whom were attracted to it. Do not rely on it, and do not trust it, for it is not trustworthy. Know that [this worldly life] would not leave [anyone safe] except those who abandon it. — [Italics mine.]³⁸

The *sanad* attached to the speech is Iraqi in its entirety. ‘Awn b. ‘Abd Allāh (d. ca. 115/733) is a grandson of the brother of Ibn Mas‘ūd, the great companion of the prophet, whose relationship with ‘Utmān was shaky to say the least.³⁹ ‘Awn himself was a Murgī’ite for

³⁸ “*Ammā ba‘du fa-innī qad [kulliftu] wa-qad qabiltu alā wa-inn-ī muttabi‘un wa-lastu bi-mubtadi‘in alā wa-inna la-kum ‘alayy-a ba‘da kitābi l-Lāhi wa-sunnati nabiyyihī talātani ttibā‘u man kāna qabl-ī fi-ma ḡtama‘tum ‘lay-hi wa-sanantum wa-sannu [sunnati] ahli l-ḥayri fi-mā lam tasunnū ‘an mala’in wa-l-kaffu ‘an-kum illā fi-ma stawḡabtum alā wa-inna d-dunyā ḥaḍiratun qad šuhhiyat ila n-nāsi wa-māla ilay-hā kaṭirun min-hum fal-lā tarkanū ila d-dunyā wa-lā taṭiqū bi-hā fa-inna-hā laysat bi-tiqatin wa-‘lamū anna-hā ḡayru tārikatin illā man tarakahā;*” Sayf b. ‘Umar, *K. ar-Riddah wa-l-futūḥ wa-kitāb al-ḡamal wa-masīr ‘Ā’ishah wa-‘Alī*, 2nd ed., ed. Qāsim as-Sāmarrā’ī (Riyadh: Dār Umayyah, 1997), §16. The same report is found on the authority of Sayf b. ‘Umar in Abū Ḡa‘far Muḥammad b. Ḡarīr aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Tārīḥ aṭ-Ṭabarī: tāriḥ ar-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, 2nd ed., ed. Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1967 [reference is made to Leiden edition pagination as found in the margins]), 1:3058-9 (from which the words in brackets are added); and in Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad al-Mālaqī, *at-Tamhīd wa-l-bayān fī maqṭal aš-šahīd ‘Utmān*, ed. Maḥmūd Yūsuf Zaydān (Doha: Dār at-Ṭaqāfah, 1985), 42. Aṭ-Ṭabarī, or a copyist of his *Tārīḥ*, has al-Qāsim (of Medina) for al-Fayḍ (of Iraq) in the *sanad*. This is unlikely, for Sayf usually narrates from al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad through an intercessor, who is usually Sahl b. Yūsuf; see aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Tārīḥ*, 1:1873, 1880, 1885-6, 1929, 1950, 1977, 2000, 2083, 2160, 2216, 3028, 3074, 3106; cf. aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Tārīḥ*, 1:1982, where other intercessors are mentioned.

³⁹ See the next section for more details, especially n. 54, p. 87 below.

some period of his life,⁴⁰ and participated in Ibn al-Aš‘aṭ’s revolt against the Umayyads,⁴¹ as many, if not most, Iraqis did.⁴² Nothing much is known about al-Fayḍ, except that he is of the *banū ‘Iḡl*,⁴³ who lived, and still do, in southern Iraq.⁴⁴ Sayf (died in the last quarter of the second Islamic century) is of course the great Iraqi historian, indispensable to historians, but still discredited by many.⁴⁵

To fully appreciate this speech, one must first deal with the apparent paradox: why is it that the pro-Umayyad, or at least the less biased, report depicts ‘Uṭmān as an incompetent caliph, who is not able to deliver a simple speech, while the Iraqi one, which is expected to be anti-Umayyad, depicts him as an eloquent speaker, with a detailed attractive agenda? To solve this paradox, one must identify the subtle messages that each report is trying to convey. The first report, while highlighting ‘Uṭmān’s incompetence,

⁴⁰ Ibn Sa‘d, *Ṭabaqāt*, 6:313; Šams ad-Dīn ad-Ḍahabī, *Siyar a‘lām an-nubalā’*, 3rd ed., ed. Šu‘ayb al-Arna’ūṭ et. al. (Beirut: Mu’assasat ar-Risālah, 1985), 5:104. See, also, Saleh Said Agha, “A Viewpoint of the Murji’a in the Umayyad Period: Evolution Through Application,” *Journal of Islamic studies* 8(1997):3n-4n, 12-13.

⁴¹ Ad-Ḍahabī, *Siyar*, 5:104.

⁴² On Ibn al-Aš‘aṭ’s revolt, which will prove to be of more relevance as we proceed in this chapter, see Redwan Sayed, *Die Revolte des Ibn al-Aš‘aṭ und die Koranleser: ein Beitrag zur Religions- und Sozialgeschichte der frühen Umayyadenzeit* (Freiburg: Schwarz, 1977).

⁴³ Al-Buḥārī, *Tārīḥ*, 7:139; Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *Ḡarḥ*, 7:88.

⁴⁴ On the Banū ‘Iḡl, see ‘Abd Allāh Sūfan, “Banū ‘Iḡl fī al-ḡāhiliyyah wa-l-Islām ilā sanat 285/898” (master’s thesis, American University of Beirut, 2004).

⁴⁵ F.M. Donner, “Sayf b. ‘Umar,” in *EI*².

induces a feeling of sympathy towards him. By weighting these two elements evenly, it encapsulates the perception of ‘Uṭmān that pervaded mainstream Islam later on. Nobody questions ‘Uṭmān’s incompetence, but it is this very incompetence that should have spared him the tragic outcome of his years in power. The second report, on the other hand, outlines a platform that ‘Uṭmān was clearly unable to fulfill. In that sense, ‘Uṭmān broke the promises he made. By uttering the pious words towards the end of his speech, ‘Uṭmān was in fact reading his own conviction statement; he was seduced by this worldly life; thus, he was taken by it.

Whether ‘Uṭmān said what has been attributed to him or not is irrelevant. What we can be certain of is that the speech is quite early, for the conception of *sunnah* that it embodies, being an ongoing *sunnah* established by the community at large, does not fit into the later discourses on this matter. The Iraqis preserved this speech as one that captures, from their perspective, the ideal relation between the ruler and his subject; a relation that is perceived as diametrically opposite to the one perceived by the Umayyads.

What is interesting for us here is that for ‘Uṭmān, or for whoever was responsible for the speech, there is no conflict between saying, “I am a follower and not a *mubtadi*’,” and saying that his duty is to establish “*sunnahs* the way good people do.” Establishing new norms is perceived as part of being a follower; but what is *mubtadi*’ then? Assuming that this text is early as we are suggesting and basing ourselves on the understanding of early *bid‘ah* that we reached in the previous chapter, we can render *mubtadi*’ here as “an independent actor.” What is crucial here is to identify the nature of this independence. when ‘Uṭmān reportedly speaks about following those who came before him, namely, Abū Bakr and ‘Umar, the text makes them merely spokesmen for the community: “following

who were before me in [matters] which *you* agreed upon, and which *you* established as *sunnahs*.” The text makes it clear; the independence is an independence from what the *community* “agreed upon,” and what *it* “established.” If this not clear yet, an adverb is added: “collectively” (*‘an mala’*).

In both texts, al-‘Irbād’s *ḥadīṭ* and ‘Uṭmān’s inaugural speech, *bid‘ah* retained its sense of independent thinking or acting. In both texts, however, an element of condemnation is added, either explicitly, in the case of the former, or implicitly, in the case of the latter. Moreover, in both texts, *bid‘ah* appears in the political context of depicting the ideal relation between the ruler and his subject. But whereas in al-‘Irbād’s *ḥadīṭ*, a *bid‘ah* seems to be an act that is done independently from political authority, it seems to be, in ‘Uṭmān’s inaugural speech, an act that is done independently from collective consensus. It is an act done by the ruled in the former, and by the ruling in the latter.

That al-‘Irbād’s *ḥadīṭ* reflects a Syrian understanding is evident. But our claim that ‘Uṭmān’s inaugural speech reflects an Iraqi conception is supported, so far, only by its *sanad*. In the next section, we will be dealing with the next episode in the history of *bid‘ah*, namely, with Ibn al-Aṣ‘aṭ’s revolt. Reading ‘Uṭmān’s inaugural speech and the rebels’ conception of *bid‘ah* in light of each other will give, I believe, a substantial support to the claim we made in this section.

III. Ibn Mas‘ūd’s Ḥadīṭ and Ibn al-Aṣ‘aṭ’s Revolt

It is reported that ‘Abd Allāh b. Mas‘ūd, the prophet’s companion, said:

The Prophet said, “After I am gone, there will be men who will be in charge of you, who extinguish *sunnah* and follow *bid‘ah*. They will delay the prayer from its proper time.” I said, “O Messenger of God, if I live to see them, what should I do?” He said, “You ask me, O Ibn Umm ‘Abd [(Ibn Mas‘ūd's nickname)], what you should do? There is no obedience to one who disobeys God.”⁴⁶

The *ḥadīth* has been narrated through several strands of *isnād*, but the higher part of these strands is common: ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Uṭmān b. Ḥuṭaym—al-Qāsim b. ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān—his father ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān b. ‘Abd Allāh—his father ‘Abd Allāh b. Mas‘ūd. One version skips ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān b. ‘Abd Allāh.⁴⁷

Whether ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān (d. 79/698) is included in the *isnād* is irrelevant; for Ibn Mas‘ūd died in AH 32 while his son was only six-year old.⁴⁸ So even if the authenticity of the *ḥadīth* is established, ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān could not have heard it from his father directly.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ “*Sa-yalī umūrakum ba’dī riḡālun yutḡī’ūna s-sunnata wa-ya’malūna bi-l-bid‘ati wa-yu’aḡḡirūna ṣ-ṣalāta ‘an mawāqitihā fa-qultu yā rasūla l-Lāhi in adraktuhum kayfa aḡalu qāla tas‘alunī ya bna ummi ‘abdin kayfa taf‘alū lā ṭā‘ata li-man ‘aṣa l-Lāh;*” Ibn Māḡah, *Sunan*, §2865. Found also with some variations in Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, §§3789-90. Another version of this *ḥadīth*, but with no mention of *bid‘ah*, is found in ‘Abd ar-Razzāq b. Hammām aṣ-Ṣan‘ānī, *al-Muṣannaḡ*, 2nd ed., ed. Ḥabīb ar-Raḥmān al-A‘ḡamī (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1983), §3788; and Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, §3889.

⁴⁷ ‘Abd ar-Razzāq, *Muṣannaḡ*, §3788; Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, §3889.

⁴⁸ Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tārīḡ*, 35:68; Ibn Ḥaḡar, *Taḡḡīb*, 6:215.

⁴⁹ There is a controversy among *ḥadīth* scholars whether ‘Abd ar-Raḡman heard from his father or not; see al-Buḡārī, *Tārīḡ*, 5:299-300; Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *ḡarḡ*, 5:248; Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tārīḡ*, 35:65-67, 70; al-Mizzī, *Taḡḡīb*, 17:239-240; Ṣams ad-Dīn aḡ-Ḍaḡabī, *Tārīḡ al-Islām wa-waḡayāt al-maṣāḡīr wa-l-a‘lām*, 2nd ed., ed. ‘Umar ‘Abd as-Salām at-Tadmurī (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī, 1993), 5:472; and Ibn Ḥaḡar, *Taḡḡīb*, 6:215-6. Some scholars distinguish between narrations in which he uses “I heard from my father” and those in which he does not explicitly use this phrase. This is based, in my opinion, on the unlikely assumption that early narrators were as careful as later scholars in quoting these phrases.

So in all cases there is a missing link. By traditional standards the *ḥadīṭ* can be considered a *munqaṭiʿ* (broken).

But it was ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿUṭmān b. Ḥuṭaym (d. 132/750), who was responsible of transmitting the *ḥadīṭ* to scholars in Mecca, as it seems. Given the ages of those scholars, as collected from biographical dictionaries, this must have taken place after the death of al-Qāsim (in ca. 116/734). But the circulation moment of a given *ḥadīṭ* might be preserving an earlier moment in the transmission of that *ḥadīṭ*. The association in our *ḥadīṭ* between *bidʿah* and delaying the prayer can help us in identifying that moment. We know that one of the major accusations against al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ b. Yūsuf at-Taqaḡī (d. 95/714, governor of Iraq 75-95/694-714) was the fact that he used to delay the Friday prayers.⁵⁰ Most probably this was the context that justified the last transmission of the *ḥadīṭ* before taking its place

⁵⁰ See, e.g., ʿAbd ar-Razzāq, *Muṣannaḡ*, §§2178, 3793, 3799; Abū Nuʿaym al-Faḡl b. Dukayn, *K. aṣ-Ṣalāh*, ed. Ṣalāh b. ʿĀyid aṣ-Ṣalāḡī (Medina: Maktabat al-Ġurabāʿ al-Aṡariyyah, 1996), §§344, 345; Ibn Saʿd, *Ṭabaqāt*, 4:159; Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, §13897; Abū ʿAwānah Yaʿqūb al-Asfarāyīnī, *al-Musnad aṣ-ṣaḡīḡ al-muḡarraḡ ʿalā “Ṣaḡīḡ” Muslim [=al-Mustaḡraḡ]*, ed. ʿAbbās b. Ṣafaḡān b. Ṣihāb ad-Dīn et. al. (Medina: al-Ġāmiʿah al-Islāmiyyah, 2014), §§1125-7; Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīḡ*, 11:236, 55:16; aḡ-Ḍaḡabī, *Siyar*, 4:306; Zayn ad-Dīn ibn Raḡab al-Ḥanbalī, *Faṡḡ al-Bārī ṣarḡ “Ṣaḡīḡ” al-Buḡārī*, ed. Maḡmūd b. Ṣaʿbān b. ʿAbd al-Maḡṣūd et. al. (Medina: Maktabat al-Ġurabāʿ al-Aṡariyyah, 1996), 4:228-9; and Ṣihāb ad-Dīn ibn Ḥaḡar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Faṡḡ al-bārī bi-ṣarḡ “Ṣaḡīḡ” al-imām Abī ʿAbd Allāh Muḡammad b. Ismāʿīl al-Buḡārī*, 3rd ed., ed. Muḡib ad-Dīn al-Ḥaṡīb, ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ibn Bāz, and Muḡammad Fuʿād ʿAbd al-Bāqī (Cairo: al-Maktabah as-Salafiyyah, 1987), 2:13-14. It seems that this became a general Umayyad policy as can be understood from Mālīk b. Anas, *al-Mudawwanah al-Kubrā*, in the recension of Ṣaḡnūn b. Saʿīd, on the authority of ʿAbd ar-Raḡmān b. Qāsim (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 1994), 1:237; ʿAbd ar-Razzāq, *Muṣannaḡ*, §3796; Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīḡ*, 15:5-7; and aḡ-Ḍaḡabī, *Siyar*, 4:306. This might have to do with the exceedingly political function of the Friday sermon in the Umayyad era.

in the *ḥadīṭ* corpus years later.⁵¹ The rebellious character of it points to the times of Ibn al-Aṣʿat revolt (80-82/699-701).⁵² If we are to believe ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿUṭmān, and there is nothing to prevent us from doing so, then al-Qāsim must have transmitted the *ḥadīṭ* in Kūfah in that period. The other option would be that ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿUṭmān himself was the one responsible for that at that time, and that he gave it later the mentioned *isnād* to the satisfaction of the *ḥadīṭ* scholars.

Nevertheless, whoever transmitted the *ḥadīṭ* during al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ's times did not necessarily create the *ḥadīṭ* out of nothing. The *ḥadīṭ* seems to be a confusion of two different *ḥadīṭs*, a confusion triggered by al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ's *bidʿah*. The first is a *ḥadīṭ* that uses the same strand (ʿAbd Allāh—al-Qāsim—ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān) and narrates the story of al-Walīd b. ʿUqbah (the governor of Kūfah in the reign of ʿUṭmān) delaying the prayer to the point

⁵¹ I am differentiating here between two stages in the transmission of the *ḥadīṭ*: the stage when every transmission needs a justification, and the stage when no such a justification is needed. The latter corresponds to the period when *ḥadīṭ* became an established discipline. While it is justified to ask about the conditions in which this *ḥadīṭ* was transmitted, it does not make much sense to ask why it finds its way to the *ḥadīṭ* corpus. In that sense, while it is important to ask about the date of circulation, it is equally important to ask about the date of the last justified transmission. The two dates might correspond, but in some cases, the circulation date corresponds merely to the date the *ḥadīṭ* became an object of scholarly study and does not reflect the date it was last transmitted in a more or less natural spontaneous way or even fabricated.

⁵² This is not a haphazard guess. It is mentioned in several sources that the main slogan that people chanted in Ibn al-Aṣʿat's revolt was "O you [seekers] of the blood-revenge of prayer, [aid me to obtain it]" (*yā tārātī ṣ-ṣalāh*); see, e.g., Abū Nuʿaym Aḥmad al-Isbahānī, *Ḥilyat al-awliyāʾ wa-ṭabaqāt al-aṣfiyāʾ* (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat as-Saʿādah, 1974), 4:379; and ad-Dahabī, *Tārīḥ*, 6:11. The factors that contributed to the initial success of Ibn al-Aṣʿat's revolt are much more complicated, but it seems that this slogan, if truly was chanted, was meant to stimulate certain segments of pious-minded people.

that upset Ibn Mas'ūd.⁵³ But it seems that this story itself is another version of a story of disputation that took place between al-Walīd and Ibn Mas'ūd over the former leading the prayer while being under wine intoxication.⁵⁴ The second is a *ḥadīth* narrated on the authority of Ibn Mas'ūd that the prophet said:

Never has God sent a prophet to his people before me who had not among his people disciples and companions who followed his ways and obeyed his command. Then there came after them their successors who said whatever they did not practice and practiced whatever they were not commanded to do. He who strives against them with his hand is a believer; he who strives against them with his tongue is a believer; and he who strives

⁵³ 'Abd ar-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, §3790; Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, §4298; aṭ-Ṭabarānī, *al-Mu'ḡam al-kabīr*, §9500; Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī, *as-Sunan al-kubrā*, 3rd ed., ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Qādir 'Aṭā (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2003), §5313; Ibn 'Asākir, *Tārīḥ*, 35:63. See also p. 111 below.

⁵⁴ The story is mentioned in many sources, but all of them quote Ibn Šabbah (probably in his nonextant *Tārīḥ al-Kūfah*), who narrates it with one strand of *isnād*; See Abū al-Faraḡ al-Aṣḡahānī, *K. al-Aḡānī*, (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyyah and al-Hay'ah al-Miṣriyyah al-Āmmah li-l-Kitāb, 1927-1994), 5:125; Abū 'Umar Yūsuf ibn 'Abd al-Barr, *al-Istī'āb fī ma'rīfat al-aṣḡāb*, ed. 'Alī Muḥammad al-Baḡāwī (Beirut: Dār al-Ġīl, 1992), 1554; and 'Izz ad-Dīn ibn al-Aṭīr, *Usd al-ḡābah fī ma'rīfat aṣ-ṣaḡābah*, ed. 'Alī Muḥammad Mu'awwaḍ and 'Ādil Aḡmad 'Abd al-Mawḡūd (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1994), 5:420. But the enmity between Ibn Mas'ūd and al-Walīd is well documented; although one must always keep in mind that this might be a later reconstruction that reflects the enmity between the people of Kūfah and the Umayyads. So is the enmity between Ibn Mas'ūd and 'Uṭmān; see Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, 3:160-1; Aḡmad b. Abī Ya'qūb al-Ya'qūbī, *Tārīḥ Aḡmad b. Abī Ya'qūb b. Ġa'far b. Waḡb al-ma'rūf bi-l-Ya'qūbī*, ed. M.Th. Houtsma (Leiden: Brill, 1883), 2:196-198; Aḡmad b. Yaḡyā al-Balāḡurī, *K. Ġumal min ansāb al-aṣṡrāf*, ed. Suhayl Zakkār and Riyāḡ az-Ziriklī (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1996), 6:146-9; Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, *Istī'āb*, 993-4; Ibn al-Aṭīr, *Usd*, 3:386-7; and 'Izz ad-Dīn 'Abd al-Ḥamīd ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, *Šarḡ "Naḡḡ al-balāḡah,"* 2nd ed., ed. Muḥammad Abū al-Faḡl Ibrāḡīm (Cairo: 'Īsā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1965), 1:199. Al-Walīd's intoxication itself, irrespective of Ibn Mas'ūd's involvement, is mentioned in many anecdotes; see, e.g., al-Aṣḡahānī, *Aḡānī*, 5:82-101; and al-Balāḡurī, *Ansāb*, 6:142-6.

against them with his heart is a believer. Beyond that there is not even a mustard seed of faith.⁵⁵

This *ḥadīṭ* was not narrated on the authority of any of the three narrators mentioned in the strand of our main *ḥadīṭ*. But judging from its *isnāds*, one can safely assume that this *ḥadīṭ* was widely circulated in Kūfah by the fourth quarter of the first Islamic century. So, al-Qāsim, for example, could easily have heard this *ḥadīṭ* that bears his grandfather's name being circulated. How the memory works is mysterious; but it is not unconceivable to see the act of al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ triggering a certain confusion. The disputation between al-Walīd and Ibn Mas'ūd over prayer under intoxication becomes a disputation over delaying prayer, and a prophecy in another *ḥadīṭ* of which al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ was perceived as the fulfilment becomes a prophecy of this specific *bid'ah*. The enmity which al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ showed towards Ibn Mas'ūd's legacy in Kūfah might have helped also in facilitating this move.⁵⁶ This enmity was

⁵⁵ “*Mā min nabiyyin ba‘aṭahu l-Lāhu fī ummatin qabl-i illā kāna la-hū min ummatihī ḥawāriyyūna wa-aṣḥābun ya’ḥudūna bi-sunnatihī wa-yaqtadūna bi-amrihī tumma inna-hā taḥlufu min ba‘di-him ḥulūfun yaqūlūna mā lā yaʿfālūna wa-yaʿfālūna mā lā yuʿmarūna fa-man ḡāhadahum bi-yadihī fa-huwa muʿminun wa-man ḡāhadahum bi-lisānihī fa-huwa muʿminun wa-man ḡāhadahum bi-qalbihī fa-huwa muʿminun wa-laysa warāʾa ḡālīka mina l-imān ḥabbatu ḥardal;*” Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, §188. Found also with some variations in Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, §§4449, 4465, 4488; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, §189.

⁵⁶ Nothing can depict this enmity more than one of al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ's orations where he reportedly said, “No one should blame me if I requite the slave of [the Banū] Ḥuḏayl [i.e., Ibn Mas'ūd] for reading the Qurʾān as if it were Bedouin *raḡaz* [(a poetic form used mostly by Bedouins)]; verily, by God, had I lived in his time, I would have beheaded him” (*ʿAdīrī min ʿabdi Ḥuḏaylin yaqraʿu l-Qurʾāna kaʿannahū raḡazu l-aʿrābi amā wa=l-Lāhi law adraktuhū la-ḡarabtu ʿunuqah*); Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Masʿūdī, *Murūḡ ad-ḡahab wa-maʿādin al-ḡawhar*, 2nd ed., ed. Yūsuf Asʿad Dāḡir (Beirut: Dār al-Andalus, 1973), 3:143; Abū ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd Rabbih, *al-ʿIqd al-farīd*, ed. ʿAbd al-Maḡīd at-Tarḡinī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 1983), 4:206; cf. Abū al-ʿArab, 317-318; and Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīḥ*, 12:159. The authenticity of this oration may be questioned, but it rightly depicts al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ's acknowledgment of two elements that challenged the establishment's hegemony: the *muhāḡirūn-aʿrāb*

bidirectional, for Ibn Mas'ūd's family, or at least part of it, is said to have participated in Ibn al-Aš'aṭ's revolt.⁵⁷

Now that the context of the transmission of this *ḥadīth* is established we can proceed to analyze the conception of *bid'ah* in it. The *ḥadīth* condemns political authorities for violating some ritualistic prescriptions. Moreover, it considers such violations as acts that would result in renouncing the public allegiance to these political authorities.

But if our claim that the *ḥadīth* is a rewriting of the other *ḥadīth* is true, then the source of condemnation of the respected authorities is that they “sa[y] whatever they d[o]

dichotomy which dominated the political and social scene in the Umayyad era, and the dissatisfaction within certain segments of society in Kūfah, not only with al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ's attempts at bringing (orthographical) improvements to the 'Uṭmānic canonical text, but also with the 'Uṭmānic canonization itself. Ibn Mas'ūd, being a *muhāḡir* of Bedouin origin, and being a reciter of the Qur'ān who allegedly challenged the 'Uṭmānic canonical text, must have represented for the Kūfans the embodiment of their dissatisfaction. On the *muhāḡirūn-a'rāb* dichotomy, see Khalil Athamina, “A'rāb and Muhāḡirūn in the Environment of Amṣār” *Studia Islamica* 66(1987): 5-25; on al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ's “*maṣāḥif* project,” see Omar Hamdan, “The Second *Maṣāḥif* Project: A Step Towards the Canonization of the Qur'anic Text,” in *The Qur'ān in Context: Historical and Literary Investigations into the Qur'anic Milieu*, ed. Angelika Neuwirth, Nicolai Sinai, and Michael Marx (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 795-835.

⁵⁷ Many of the figures who were later considered the carriers of Ibn Mas'ūd's legacy were active in Ibn al-Aš'aṭ's revolt; nevertheless, within Ibn Mas'ūd's family, our sources mention only his son Abū 'Ubaydah, and 'Awn b. 'Abd Allāh, the grandson of his brother. But this might be due to the fact that while others survived the revolt, Abū 'Ubaydah was killed in it, while 'Awn participated in later negotiations with 'Umar II. On Abū 'Ubaydah's participation in Ibn al-Aš'aṭ's revolt, see, e.g., Abū 'Amr Ḥalīfah b. Ḥayyāt, *Tārīḥ Ḥalīfah b. Ḥayyāt*, 3rd ed., ed. Akram Ḍiyā' al-'Umarī (Riyadh: Dār Ṭibah, 1985), 283, 287; Abū al-'Arab Muḥammad at-Tamīmī, *K. al-Miḥan*, 3rd ed., ed. Yaḥyā Wahīb al-Ġabbūrī (Beirut: Dār al-Ġarb al-Islāmī, 2006), 229; and aḍ-Ḍahabī, *Tārīḥ*, 6:14, 16. Moreover, Abū al-'Arab records what seems to be the minutes of an interrogation of Abū 'Ubaydah conducted by al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ, probably just before the former joined the revolt; *Miḥan*, 317-318. As for 'Awn's participation, see p. 80 above.

not practice, and practice... whatever they [a]re not commanded to do.” But such a condemnation seems to be the product of the same mindset that was responsible for circulating ‘Uṭmān’s inaugural speech. ‘Uṭmān promised to follow the *sunnah* as established by the community. He failed to do that, and by that he failed to fulfil his promises.

Delaying the prayer then seems to be merely a symbolic violation, the condemnation of which was meant to encapsulate Iraqis’ dissatisfaction with al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ’s policies. Ibn al-Aṣ‘at’s revolt is complicated enough not to be reduced to one factor. Nevertheless, when delaying the prayer is perceived as a symbol for aggression against the community and its practiced tradition, it can become indeed a potent symbol.

Nothing can show the political origin of perceiving the prayer delay as a *bid‘ah* more than a simple comparison between the legal opinions of the Mālikites and the Imāmīs on the matter. For Mālikites, the time of the noon prayer (*ṣalātu ṣ-ṣuḥr*) begins when the sun crosses the meridian and continues till the shadow of an object becomes as long as its height.⁵⁸ This limit is for an unconstrained person (*muḥtār*); as for one who is constrained (*muḍṭarr*), the time can be extended.⁵⁹ As for Imāmīs, the noon prayer can be combined with the afternoon prayer (*ṣalātu l-‘aṣr*) without the need of any justification. In that sense, both prayers share an extended time that runs from noon till sunset, except that the first few minutes of that period are restricted for the noon prayer, while the last few minutes

⁵⁸ ‘Abd al-Wahhāb Ḥallāf, *al-Fiqh ‘alā al-maḏāhib al-arba‘ah* (Cairo: Maṭābi‘ aṣ-Ṣa‘b, n.d.), 94.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

for the afternoon prayer.⁶⁰ Paradoxically, when it comes to the congregational Friday prayer, which supplants the noon prayer on Fridays, the Mālikites, including Mālik himself, tend to be more lenient, allowing extending its time till sunset,⁶¹ while the Imāmīs tend to be more restrictive, requiring performing it *immediately* after the sun crosses the meridian.⁶² The paradox can be solved only in reference to the political dimension associated with the issue.⁶³

This discrepancy shows that there is nothing essential about delaying the Friday prayer that would make it a condemned practice. Being an innovation was not enough for Mālik to condemn it, although he lived in an age in which a general condemnation of *bid'ah* is attested. As for the Imāmīs' condemnation, it is clearly not because the practice violates Islamic law, thus not for being a *bid'ah* in the technical sense, for they accepted without hesitation the practice of combining the noon and afternoon prayers in other days of the week. More likely, it was a measure taken by the *imāms* to delegitimize the rulers leading

⁶⁰ Muḥammad Ġawād Muḡniyyah, *Fiqh al-imām Ġa'far aṣ-Ṣādiq*. 5th ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Ġawād and Dār at-Tayyār al-Ġadīd, 1984), 1:142-3.

⁶¹ Ḥallāf, *Fiqh*, 198. Mālikites' position is based on Mālik's opinion as found in *Mudawwanah*, 1:239.

⁶² Muḡniyyah, *Fiqh aṣ-Ṣādiq*, 1:278.

⁶³ The Ḥanbalite Ibn Raḡab (795/1393) seems to be aware of this political dimension; but since he came at a time when the concept of *bid'ah* as religious innovation was firmly established, he dismisses Mālikites' opinion in a quite harsh statement, saying that this practice of delaying Friday prayer is not known to be done "except by the unjust [people] among the Umayyads and their supporters, and it is among what they innovated in Islam" (*illā 'an ḡalamati banī Umayyata wa-a'wānihim wa-huwa mim-ma btada'ūhu fi l-Islām*); *Fath*, 8:179. What is interesting for us is the fact that this level of evidentiality seems to have escaped Mālik.

the Friday prayer, and to discourage their followers (the Šī'ites) from participating in the congregational prayer.⁶⁴

But the *ḥadīth* of Ibn Mas'ūd suggests that the Iraqis *did* consider the delay *bid'ah*. Only when we start thinking of the delay as a symbolic aggression against the established community practice, we can start to understand the source of Iraqi anger, and to comprehend their conception of *bid'ah*.

* * *

If our analysis is correct, then labeling the prayer delay as *bid'ah* during Ibn al-Aš'at's revolt has nothing to do with being an unprecedented innovation. Nevertheless, the revolt managed to create a lasting association between *bid'ah* and ritualistic practices. This association was crucial for later developments, but for decades it was mainly Iraqi, and, to a lesser degree, Meccan.⁶⁵ It took the Syrians and people of Medina much more time to develop such an association. Meanwhile, the Syrian conception of *bid'ah* came to be crucially modified at the hands of 'Umar II (r. 99-101/717-720). These developments on both fronts will be the subject of the next chapter.

⁶⁴ It is important to note here that there is a consensus among the Imāmīs that Friday prayer cannot be performed without the permission of the legitimate *imām* of the time; see Muḡniyyah, *Fiqh aṣ-Šādiq*, 1:275-6. It is not clear when this consensus developed, but it seems to be related to the process by which the Imāmīs became separate sects. The fact that the consensus is not based on any textual evidence (*ibid.*, 275) suggests that the condemnation of delaying the prayer among the Imāmīs was earlier and was meant to be a step in that direction. On the mentioned process, see Marshall G.S. Hodgson, "How Did the Early Shi'a become Sectarian?" *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 75(1955): 1-13.

⁶⁵ See pp. 139ff. below.

IV. First Excursion: Prophetic Traditions on *Bid'ah*

There are eight *ḥadīths* in the major collections⁶⁶ where the word *bid'ah* (or one of its derivatives or related words) is used with an implicit or explicit condemnation. We have dealt with al-'Irbād's and Ibn Mas'ūd's *ḥadīths* in this chapter, and we have shown that they reflect two different attitudes in the last quarter of the first Islamic century. Two other *ḥadīths* reflect a later attitude and deserve to be treated fully in chapter five. The remaining four *ḥadīths* do not add much to our understanding of *bid'ah*, but they may be used in counterarguments as attestations of an early condemnation of *bid'ah* in the sense of religious innovation. In this excursion, I will deal with these four *ḥadīths* in a compact manner.

A. Anas's Prophetic Tradition

It was narrated that Anas b. Mālik said:

The Messenger of God used to say: Do not impose austerities on yourselves so that austerities will be imposed on you, for people have imposed austerities on themselves and God imposed austerities on them. Their survivors are to be found in cells and monasteries. [Then he quoted] "But the Monasticism which they *ibtada'ū* for themselves, We did not prescribe for them" [Qur'ān 57:27].⁶⁷

⁶⁶ By that I mean the six canonical books in addition to Ibn Ḥanbal's *Musnad*, Mālik's *Muwatta'*, and the two *Muṣannaḥs* of 'Abd ar-Razzāq and Ibn Abi Šaybah.

⁶⁷ *Lā tušaddidū 'alā anfusikum fa-yašaddada 'alay-kum fa-inna qawmān šaddadū 'alā anfusihim fa-šaddada l-Lāhu 'alay-him fa-tilka baqāyahum fi ṣ-ṣawāmī'i wa-d-diyāri wa-rahbāniyyatani btada'ūhā mā katabnāhā 'alay-him*; Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, §4904.

The *ḥadīṭ* has the following *isnād*: ‘Abd Allāh b. Wahb—Sa‘īd b. ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān b. Abī al-‘Amyā’—Sahl b. Abī Umāmah. It is said that Anas narrated this *ḥadīṭ* when ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz was the governor of Medina (87-93/706-712). Sa‘īd b. ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān is not mentioned in any other *isnād* in the major collections of *ḥadīṭ*, and not much is known about him.⁶⁸

The *ḥadīṭ* quotes the Qur’ānic verse with which we fully dealt in chapter two.⁶⁹ The verb *kataba* is understood here in a manner different from the way we argued for there. In all cases, the exegetical nature of the *ḥadīṭ*, that is, the attempt to account for the Qur’ānic verse, makes it less interested in developing a coherent conception of *bid‘ah*; therefore, we can see that the condemnation of *bid‘ah* is mild. Here, the *bid‘ah* might result in a divine prescription.

B. ‘Amr b. ‘Awf’s Prophetic Tradition

It is reported through an *isnād* that runs through Kaṭīr b. ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Amr b. ‘Awf al-Muzanī—his father—his grandfather that the prophet said:

Whoever revives a *sunnah* of mine that dies out after I am gone, he will have a reward equivalent to that of those among the people who act upon it, without that detracting from their reward in the slightest. Whoever *yabtadi‘u bid‘ah* with which God and his messenger

⁶⁸ Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *Ġarḥ*, 4:41; al-Mizzī, *Tahḏīb*, 10:535.

⁶⁹ See pp. 29ff. above.

are not pleased, he will have a (burden of) sin equivalent to that of those among the people who act upon it, without that detracting from their sins in the slightest.⁷⁰

Kaṭīr (d. ca. 160/777) is generally considered “weak” (*ḍaʿīf*) by traditional standards. He has been accused of narrating on the authority of his father and grandfather reprehensible (*munkar*) *ḥadīṭ*s.⁷¹ The *ḥadīṭ* under consideration reflects what I consider a later conception of *bidʿah*, but given its *isnād*, it cannot serve as an attestation for an early usage. Moreover, the *ḥadīṭ* seems to be a reworking of that of Ḡarīr b. ʿAbd Allāh discussed in chapter two.⁷²

C. Ḥuḍayfah’s Prophetic Tradition

It was narrated that Ḥuḍayfah said that the prophet said:

God will not accept any fasting, prayer, charity, pilgrimage, ʿumra, ḡihād, ransom, or repentance from a person who follows *bidʿah*. He comes out of Islam like a hair pulled out of dough.⁷³

⁷⁰ *Man aḥyā sunnatān min sunnatī qad umītat baʿdī fa-inna la-hū mina l-aḡri miṭla aḡri man ʿamila bi-hā mina n-nāsi lā yanquṣu min uḡūri n-nāsi šayʿan wa-mani btadaʿa bidʿatan lā yarḍāha l-Lāhu wa-rasūluhū fa-inna ʿalay-hi miṭla iṭmi man ʿamila bi-hā mina n-nāsi lā yanquṣu min āṭāmi n-nāsi šayʿā*; Ibn Māḡah, *Sunan*, §210. Found also with minor variations in Ibn Māḡah, *Sunan*, §209; and at-Tirmidī, *Ġāmiʿ*, §2677.

⁷¹ Al-Mizzī, *Tahḍīb*, 24:136-140; aḍ-Ḍahabī, *Mizān*, 3:406-8.

⁷² See pp. 53ff. above.

⁷³ *Lā yaqbalu l-Lāhu li-šāḥibi bidʿatin ṣawman wa-lā ṣalātan wa-lā ṣadaqatan wa-lā ḥaḡḡan wa-lā ʿumratan wa-lā ḡihādan wa-la ṣarfan wa-lā ʿadlan yaḥruḡu mina l-Islāmi ka-mā taḥruju š-šaʿratu mina l-ʿaḡīn*; Ibn Māḡa, *Sunan*, §49.

The *ḥadīṭ* is considered fabricated by a certain Muḥammad b. Miḥṣan,⁷⁴ who appears in the *isnād* between Ibrāhīm b. Abī ‘Ablah (d. 151/769) and Abū Hāšim b. Abī Ḥidāš al-Mawṣili (d. 222/837); therefore, the *ḥadīṭ* cannot be used as an early attestation of a condemnation of *bid‘ah*. Moreover, there is nothing that would indicate what is meant by *bid‘ah* in it.

D. Ibn ‘Abbās’s Prophetic Tradition

Abū al-Muḡīrah narrated on the authority of ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abbās that the prophet said:

God refuses to accept the good deeds of one who follows (*ṣāhib* of) *bid‘ah* until he gives up his *bid‘ah*.⁷⁵

The *ḥadīṭ* is narrated through the following *isnād*: ‘Abd Allāh b. Sa‘īd (257/871)—Bišr b. Maṣṣūr—Abū Zayd—Abū al-Muḡīrah. The last three names are unknown;⁷⁶ therefore, the *ḥadīṭ* cannot be used as an early attestation of a condemnation of *bid‘ah*. Moreover, there is nothing that would indicate what is meant by *bid‘ah* in it.

V. Second Excursion: On the Meaning of Ḥadaṭ and Iḥdāt

A special treatment of the root *ḥdṭ* seems necessary, not only to support our understanding of the term *muḥḍaṭah* in al-‘Irbād b. Sāriyah’s *ḥadīṭ* discussed above,⁷⁷ but also to dismiss

⁷⁴ Muḥammad Nāṣir ad-Dīn al-Albānī, *Silsilat al-aḥādīṭ aḍ-ḍa‘īfah wa-l-mawḍū‘ah wa-aṭaruhā as-sayyi’ fī al-ummah* (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Ma‘ārif, 1992), §1493.

⁷⁵ *Aba l-Lāhu an yaqbala ‘amala ṣāhibi bid‘atin ḥattā yada‘a bir‘atah*; Ibn Māḡa, *Sunan*, §50.

⁷⁶ Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *Ḥarḥ*, 9:439.

⁷⁷ See p. 67 above.

any early attestation of the concept of religious innovation as a condemned practice contrasted with *sunnah*. In other words, even if we manage to show that *bid'ah* acquired its later sense gradually, our efforts would remain in vain if the concept of religious innovation existed from early on but was signified by another term. The problem here is that a few derivatives of the root *ḥdṭ* appear in *ḥadīṭ*s that are related, or thought to be related, to the concept of religious innovation. The first is the passive participle of form IV, *muḥḍaṭ*, and its plural, *muḥḍaṭāt*. This appears, as we have seen in al-ʿIrbād's *ḥadīṭ*. Moreover, the axiomatic statements towards the end of the *ḥadīṭ*, namely, "Avoid *muḥḍaṭāt* matters, for every *muḥḍaṭah* is a *bid'ah*, and every *bid'ah* is an error," appear in another *ḥadīṭ* and in a saying attributed to Ibn Mas'ūd that will be discussed in the chapter five.⁷⁸ The second derivative is the perfect verb *aḥḍaṭa* of form IV also. This appears in a *ḥadīṭ* in which the prophet reportedly said,

Whoever *aḥḍaṭa* in this matter of ours what does not belong to it, then [his *iḥḍāt*] is to be rejected.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ See pp. 171ff. below.

⁷⁹ "*Man aḥḍaṭa fī amrinā mā laysa min-hu fa-huwa radd*," Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, §26860. Cf. Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, §§24954, 25641, 25986, 26561, 26721; Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl al-Buḥārī, *al-Ġāmiʿ aṣ-ṣaḥīḥ al-musnad*, Edited by Muḥibb ad-Dīn al-Ḥaṭīb, Muḥammad Fuʿād ʿAbd al-Bāqī, and Quṣayy Muḥibb ad-Dīn al-Ḥaṭīb (Cairo: al-Maṭbaʿah as-Salafiyyah, 1979), §2697; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, §4513-4; Ibn Māğah, *Sunan*, §14; Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, §4606; ʿAlī b. ʿUmar ad-Dāraquṭnī, *Sunan ad-Dāraquṭnī*, with *at-Taʿlīq al-muğnī ʿalā ʿad-Dāraquṭnī* by Muḥammad Šams al-Ḥaqq al-ʿAzīm Ābādī on its lower margin, ed. Šuʿayb al-Arnaʿūṭ et. al. (Beirut: Muʿassasat ar-Risālah, 2004), §§4534-7.

It also appears in the famous *ḥadīṭ* of the pool (*ḥadīṭu l-ḥawḍ*),⁸⁰ in which the prophet reportedly said,

Some people will come to me at the pool [that is, in the day after]. As soon as I see them being brought to me, they will be taken away. Whereupon I will say, “Oh my Lord! My companions! My companions.” Then it will be said, “You do not know what they *aḥḍaṭū* after you.”⁸¹

The third derivative is the active participle *muḥḍiṭ* of form IV also. This appears in some *ḥadīṭs* that seem all to be quoting the famous *ṣaḥīfah* of Medina,⁸² where we read,

⁸⁰ The pool of the prophet is “that of which the Apostle’s people will be given to drink on the day of resurrection,” Edward William Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, completed by Stanley Lane-Poole (London: Williams and Norgate, 1863-93), s. v., “ḥwḍ.”

⁸¹ “*La-yaridanna l-ḥawḍa ‘lay-ya riḡālun ḥattā idā ra’aytuhum rufī’ū ilay-ya fa-ḥtuliḡū dūnī fa-la-aqūlanna yā rabbi aṣḥābī aṣḥābī fa-yaqūlu inna-ka lā tadri mā aḥḍaṭū ba’dak*,” Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, §14036. The *ḥadīṭ* is considered *mutawātir* by traditional standards, and it is narrated on the authority of many companions through many different channels. It appears in almost all canonical *ḥadīṭ* collections, with the notable exception of Mālik’s *Muwatta’*, with many variations, but the expression *aḥḍaṭū ba’dak* is more or less stable. Cf. ‘Abd ar-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, §§20854-5; Ibn Abī Šaybah, *Muṣannaf*, §§42, 26774, 32312, 32317-8, 32323-4, 32325, 32328, 32331, 32473, 32477, 35232, 35538, 37087, 37098-9, 38321, 38332-5; Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, §§1950, 2027, 2096, 2281-2, 3639, 3812, 3850, 3866, 4042, 4180, 4332, 4351, 7955, 9856, 10031, 11155-6, 11238, 11365, 11612, 12017, 12019, 12445, 15981, 20768, 20781, 23210, 23679, 23726, 23785, 23893, 25413, 27081; Buḥārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, §§2367, 3349, 3447, 4625-6, 4740, 6526, 6575-6, 6582-6, 7049-51; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, §§503, 824-5, 6032-5, 6038-40, 6043-6, 6059-60, 6062-3, 7303; Ibn Māḡah, *Sunan*, §3057; Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, §784, 4747; at-Tirmidī, *Ġāmi’*, §2423, 3167; an-Nasā’ī, *Sunan*, 2:133, 4:114.

⁸² The *ṣaḥīfah* of Medina is a treaty that is said to have been concluded between the prophet and the people of Yaṭrib; see R.B. Serjeant, “The *Sunnah Jāmi’ah*, Pacts with the Yathrib Jews, and the *Tahrīm* of Yathrib: Analysis and Translation of the Documents Comprised in the So-Called ‘Constitution of Medina’,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 41(1978): 1-42.; Michael Lecker, *The Constitution of Medina: Muḥammad’s First Legal Document* (Princeton, NJ: Darwin, 2004); and Fred M. Donner, *Muhammad*

It is not permissible for the Believer who affirms what it is this treaty (*ṣaḥīfah*), and believes in God and the Last Day, to aid a *muḥḍit* or to give him refuge. Whosoever aids him or gives him refuge shall have upon him the curse of God and His wrath on the Day of Resurrection; and neither repentance nor ransom will be accepted from him.⁸³

In some of those *ḥadīṭs* that seem to be quoting the *ṣaḥīfah*, the verbal noun *ḥadaṭ* of form I, the imperfect passive verb *yuḥḍatu* of form IV, and the perfect verb *aḥḍata* of form IV, appear also.⁸⁴ Some scholars also give *muḥḍat* as an alternative reading for *muḥḍit*.⁸⁵

Muslim scholars in general understood all these instances to be related to religious innovation, or *bidʿah* to use their terminology.⁸⁶ I have already suggested that the word

and the Believers: *At the Origins of Islam* (Cambridge, Mass: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010), 227-232.

⁸³ “*Wa-innahū lā yaḥillu li-muʾminin aqarra bi-mā fī ḥādīhi ṣ-ṣaḥīfati wa-āmana bi-l-Lāhi wa-l-yawmi l-āhiri an yaṣura muḥḍitan wa-lā yuʾwīhi wa-annahū man naṣarahū aw āwāhu fa-inna ʿalayhi laʾnata l-Lāhi wa-ḡaḍabahū yawma l-qiyāmati wa-lā yuʾḥaḍu minhu ṣarfun wa-lā ʿadl;*” ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Hišām, *as-Sirah an-nabawiyyah*, 2nd ed., ed. Muṣṭafā as-Saqqā, Ibrāhīm al-Abyārī, and ‘Abd al-Ḥafīẓ Šalabī (Cairo: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1955), 2:148-9. I have used Donner’s translation as found in his *Muhammad and the Believers*, 230, but I kept the word *muḥḍit* untranslated, and added diacritics to the word *ṣaḥīfah*.

⁸⁴ See, e.g., al-Buḥārī, *Ġāmiʿ*, §1867, where the three terms appear.

⁸⁵ See Badr ad-Dīn al-ʿAynī, *ʿUmdat al-qārī šarḥ “Ṣaḥīḥ” al-Buḥārī* (Cairo: Idārat aṭ-Ṭibāʿah al-Muniriyyah, AH 1348), 10:228-9. Nevertheless, this alternative reading, I believe, seems quite unlikely given the context. Lane, following Ibn Manẓūr’s *Lisān*, gives both readings, interpreting *muḥḍat* in the *ḥadīṭ* to mean “an innovation”, and *muḥḍit* to mean “a criminal;” *Lexicon*, s. v., “*ḥḍt*,” cf. Ġamāl ad-Dīn ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab*, ed. ‘Abd Allāh ‘Alī al-Kabīr, Muḥammad Aḥmad Ḥasab Allāh, and Hāšim Muḥammad aš-Šādīlī (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1981), s. v., “*ḥḍt*.”

⁸⁶ We have seen that in the case of al-ʿIrbād’s *ḥadīṭ*. As for the second *ḥadīṭ*, we will see that shortly. As for the *ṣaḥīfah* of Medina, see al-ʿAynī, *ʿUmdah*, 10:228-9.

muḥdat in al-ʿIrbāq’s *ḥadīṭ* should be understood to mean an act that would revoke the protection rights offered by the community. I have showed also that this understanding makes sense given the structure of the *ḥadīṭ*. In this section, I will show that this is a valid interpretation that rests on a solid foundation. Moreover, I will show that *ḥdt* and its derivatives were never used in the sense of religious innovation in the early tradition, and more specifically, not in any of the instances mentioned above. I will start with an exposition of the root *ḥdt* in the dictionaries. Then, I will offer my critique of their treatment, and my understanding of the root and its derivatives as used in the mentioned *ḥadīṭ*s and in other discourses. Finally, I will treat the second *ḥadīṭ* separately.

A. The Lexicons’ Treatment of the Root and Its Derivatives

Arabic lexicons in general try to link the different senses of the root *ḥdt* and its derivatives to one principal meaning (*asl*). According to Ibn Fāris, the root *ḥdt* has to do with being after nonbeing.⁸⁷ From that sense, we arrive at *ḥadaṭ* as a novelty in general, and as a religious innovation in particular.⁸⁸ Moreover, lexicons mention many special uses and senses, suggesting that these are qualified uses that can be understood from context. Thus, a *muḥdīṭ* can mean a criminal,⁸⁹ in the sense that innovation is a crime, or that any crime

⁸⁷ Aḥmad ibn Fāris, *Mu‘ḡam maqāyīs al-luḡah*, ed. ‘Abd as-Salām Hārūn (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1979), s. v., “*ḥdt*.” Similar statements can be found in other dictionaries; nevertheless, *Maqāyīs* is singled out here because it is famous for trying to establish the general meaning of the roots before dealing with their derivatives.

⁸⁸ Lane, *Lexicon*, s. v., “*ḥdt*,” Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān*, s. v., “*ḥdt*.”

⁸⁹ Lane, *Lexicon*, s. v., “*ḥdt*,” Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān*, s. v., “*ḥdt*.”

involves a sort of innovation. Similarly, *ḥadaṭānu d-dahr* are the “the evil accidents, or calamities, of time or fortune,”⁹⁰ in the sense that they take place after being absent.

Nevertheless, after reviewing all the medieval lexical material on *ḥdt*, Ḥasan al-Muṣṭafawī, a prominent modern lexicographer of the Qurʾān, makes a strong case against understanding the root *ḥdt* as indicating a new existence preceded by nonexistence, as suggested by Ibn Fāris’s definition.⁹¹ Thus, the *ḥadīṭ* is not meant originally to be contrasted with the *qadīm* (eternal) or with *ʿadam* (nonexistence), in the manner employed by later theologians and philosophers. Rather, al-Muṣṭafawī argues forcefully, the root *ḥdt* has to do with becoming (*takawwun*) and renewal (*tağaddud*).⁹²

This seems to be a step in the right direction. Nevertheless, examining the more concrete uses of the root *ḥdt* and its derivatives suggests that even this sense of becoming and renewal might be a derived sense. Among the most concrete derivative nouns is the *ḥadaṭān*, which signifies an ax with one head.⁹³ Moreover, we have, “he *aḥdaṭa* or *ḥādaṭa*

⁹⁰ Lane, *Lexicon*, s. v., “*ḥdt*.”

⁹¹ Ḥasan al-Muṣṭafawī, *at-Taḥqīq fī kalimāt “al-Qurʾān” al-karīm* (Tehran: Muʾassasat at-Ṭibāʿah wa-n-Naṣr, Wizārat at-Ṭaqāfah wa-l-Irṣād al-Islāmī, 1995), s. v., “*ḥdt*.”

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ Abū Manṣūr al-Azhārī, *Tahḏīb al-luġah*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAwaḍ Marʿab et. al. (Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ at-Turāṭ al-ʿArabī, 2001), s. v., “*ḥdt*,” ʿAlī b. Ismāʿīl ibn Sīdah, *al-Muḥkam wa-l-muḥīṭ al-aʿzam*, ed. ʿAbd al-Ḥamid Hindāwī (Beirut: 11 vols. Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 2000), 3:253. Curiously, this sense is not mentioned in Lane’s *Lexicon*.

his sword,” meaning that he polished it.⁹⁴ Muḥammad Ġabal, another prominent modern lexicographer of the Qur‘ān, uses these examples and others to suggest that the central meaning of the root has to do with exposing (*kašf*) through scraping, carving, and other means of cutting.⁹⁵

B. My Contribution to the Discussion

Ġabal’s treatment is not necessarily at odds with al-Muṣṭafawī’s. Nevertheless, it *does* give the “renewal and becoming” in the latter’s a new significance. If Ġabal is right, then *ḥdt* has little to do with transformation into something new; rather, it has more to do with regaining an older status or revoking the current one. Of course, revoking a certain situation may involve transforming it into a new one, but this is only accidental and not necessarily assumed or intended when using the terms derived from *ḥdt*.

What makes Ġabal’s understanding of *ḥdt* more desirable than its alternatives is that it has a higher explanatory power. For example, *ḥaddaṭa*, to tell, and *ḥadīṭ*, a talk, seem to be remotely connected with the central meaning suggested by Ibn Fāris. Al-Muṣṭafawī’s understanding of the root in terms of renewal seems to be more appropriate. *Ḥadīṭ*, being a retelling of a past event, is in a way recreating that event in the minds of the interlocutors,

⁹⁴ Lane, *Lexicon*, s. v., “*ḥdt*.”

⁹⁵ Muḥammad Ḥasan Ḥasan Ġabal, *al-Muḡam al-ištiqāqī al-mu’aṣṣal li-alfāz “al-Qur’ān” al-karīm* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Ādāb, 2010), s. v., “*ḥdt*.”

or say, renewing it.⁹⁶ Still, Ġabal's central meaning seems to be even more adequate; *ḥadīt* is exposing or revealing a truth or a past event by retelling it.⁹⁷

Similarly, we have seen that *ḥadaṭānu d-dahr* are understood to be “the evil accidents, or calamities, of time or fortune,” and that *ḥadaṭān* is said to be derived from *ḥdṭ* in the sense that these accidents take place after being absent. But, in most cases, *ḥadaṭānu d-dahr* is used to indicate death that comes suddenly to put an end to an otherwise vigorous life. For example, Abu Du'ayb al-Hudālī, a famous pre-Islamic and early Islamic poet, used this expression three times in his elegy of his five sons, who reportedly died in a single year, to show that *ḥadaṭānu d-dahr* would not spare wild asses living their lives to the fullest, nor dogs and wild oxen, nor honorable knights.⁹⁸ *Ḥadaṭānu d-dahr* are indeed evil accidents, but they do not involve bringing something new to these creatures, nor transforming or renewing their lives. Rather, *ḥadaṭānu d-dahr* are nulling their current lives. In that sense, they resemble *ḥadaṭān* when used substantively to indicate a one-head ax.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Al-Muṣṭafawī, *Tahqīq*, s. v., “*ḥdṭ*.”

⁹⁷ Ġabal, *Muḡam*, s. v., “*ḥdṭ*.”

⁹⁸ Abū al-ʿAbbās al-Mufaḍḍal aḍ-Ḍabbī, *Dīwān al-mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, commentated upon by al-Qāsim ibn al-Anbārī, ed. and trans. C. J. Lyall (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1918-1921), §126, especially verses 14, 35, and 49.

⁹⁹ Ibn Sīdah noted the resemblance, but understood it as going in the opposite direction; i.e., he thought that an ax might have been called *ḥadaṭān* out of its resemblance to *ḥadaṭānu d-dahr*; *Muḥkam*, 3:253. This might reflect the general tendency among medieval lexicographers, in contrast to modern philologists, to give priority to abstract meanings over concrete ones; cf. Ibrāhīm Anīs, *Dalālat al-alfāz*, 5th ed. (Cairo: Maktabat al-Anḡlū al-Miṣriyyah, 1984), 161-5.

A more telling example is using *aḥḍata* in the sense of doing something that would annul one's state of legal purity, and require the renewal of minor or major ablution.¹⁰⁰ While annulling the state of legal purity involves the occurrence of something new, the use of *aḥḍata* in this context still seems quite arbitrary if we were to accept Ibn Fāris's central meaning, or even al-Muṣṭafawī's. On the other hand, the verb derives well when the root *ḥḍt* is understood in Ġabal's terms; the verb involves revoking a certain status and returning to an older one.

This is not to say that *ḥḍt*, or at least some of its derivatives, did not acquire the sense of newness and novelty from an earlier stage. Some did. Rather, it should serve us as a warning against rushing into hasty judgments when coming across terms derived from *ḥḍt* in classical texts. A good illustration of this is the way we should read *ḥadaṭ* and *aḥḍata* when used in the context of the civil strife towards the end of 'Uṭmān's reign and its aftermath. One of the main accusations that were forwarded by the rebels against 'Uṭmān was that he committed *ḥadaṭ*.¹⁰¹ On the other hand, the main accusation that was forwarded by Mu'āwiyah and the Syrians against 'Alī was that he gave refuge to those rebels who had committed *ḥadaṭ* by killing 'Uṭmān. This is illustrated in the following verse attributed to Ka'b b. Ġu'ayl of Mu'āwiyah's camp:

There is nothing for a reproacher to say [against] 'Alī except for his embracement of the
muḥḍitūn [who killed 'Uṭmān].¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Lane, *Lexicon*, s. v., "*ḥḍt*."

¹⁰¹ This is well attested in historical sources; see, e.g., aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Tārīḥ*, 1:2967, 2994, 2997, 3024.

¹⁰² "*Wa-mā fi 'Aliyyin li-musta'tibin / maqālun siwā ḍammihi l-muḥḍitīnā*;" Naṣr b. Muzāḥim, *Waq'at Ṣiffīn*, 2nd ed., ed. 'Abd as-Salām Hārūn (Cairo: al-Mu'assasah al-'Arabiyyah al-Ḥadīthah, 1962), 57; Ibn Abī

It is clear in this context that the nature of accusations brought against both ‘Uṭmān and the rebels had little to do with merely acting in an unprecedented manner. This is why dictionaries introduce the sense of criminality as one of the senses of *ḥdt*.¹⁰³ But this raises the question: why would the crimes allegedly committed by ‘Uṭmān or the rebels be labeled as *ḥadaṭs*? Given the common understanding of the term as represented in Ibn Fāris’s treatment, or even in al-Muṣṭafawī’s, there is little to support such labeling. The context here is crucial. We are here in front of a ruler and his subjects who are bound together by a pledge of allegiance. This allegiance sets duties on both sides. The *ḥadaṭs* allegedly committed by ‘Uṭmān were perceived by the rebels as valid excuses for breaking the pledge of allegiance. In a similar line of thought, ‘Uṭmān himself, to his defense, reportedly said,

I did not *uḥḍitu* the [type] of *ḥadaṭ* that would require me to step down.¹⁰⁴

On the other hand, the crime committed by the rebels amounts to breaking this very pledge of allegiance. In that sense, the “crimes” on both sides related to revoking the pact conducted between them. Furthermore, when Ṭalḥah and az-Zubayr broke their pledge of allegiance to ‘Ali, the question that was raised was the following:

Did [‘Alī] *aḥḍata* a *ḥadaṭ* that would make breaking the pledge of allegiance to him permissible?¹⁰⁵

al-Ḥadīd, *Ṣarḥ*, 2:128. That the killers of ‘Uṭmān were accused of committing *ḥadaṭs* is also well attested in historical sources; see, e.g., aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Tārīḥ*, 1:3116.

¹⁰³ Lane, *Lexicon*, s. v., “*ḥdt*.”

¹⁰⁴ “*Wa-lam uḥḍit minā l-ḥadaṭi mā yanbaḡi l-ī an a’tazila ‘amali;*” aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Tārīḥ*, 1:2919; cf. *ibid.*, 1:3024.

¹⁰⁵ “*Hal aḥḍata ḥadaṭan yaḥillu bi-hī naqḍu bay‘atih;*” aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Tārīḥ*, 1:3152.

In this case, Ġabal's central meaning of *ḥḍṭ* seems to offer the best answer to the question of labeling. *Ḥadaṭ* here seems to be an act that revokes a certain status or facilitates the return to a previous unbounded state of affairs.

C. *Ḥadaṭ Should Not Be Interpreted as Religious Innovation*

The way *ḥḍṭ* is used in the narratives that related the first civil strife in Islam offers us some clues for interpreting most of the *ḥadīṡs* by which we started this excursion. In the *ṣaḥīfah* of Medina, believers are warned against aiding a *muḥdīṡ* or giving him refuge.¹⁰⁶ Donner renders *muḥdīṡ* as "sinner." In brackets, he offers "murderer" as an alternative translation, with a question mark indicating uncertainty.¹⁰⁷ But Donner is not alone in this interpretation, nor in his uncertainty. Ibn Ġurayġ, the great lawyer of Mecca, also was not certain about the meaning of *muḥdīṡ* when he heard Ġa'far aṣ-Ṣādiq narrating parts of the *ṣaḥīfah*, which was reportedly preserved with 'Alī after the prophet's death. He had to ask for a confirmation from aṣ-Ṣādiq that the *muḥdīṡ* is the murderer, and the response was positive.¹⁰⁸ According to aṣ-Ṣādiq, as Ma'mar narrated from him in another *ḥadīṡ*, even the companions were not certain about the meaning of the word, so they asked the prophet. The prophet's answer was:

¹⁰⁶ See p. 98 above.

¹⁰⁷ Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers*, 230.

¹⁰⁸ 'Abd ar-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, §18847. 'Abd ar-Razzāq narrates this directly from Ibn Ġurayġ.

[The *muḥḍit* is] the one who lashes [another person] not out of [the implementation of] legal punishment or kills with no right [to kill].¹⁰⁹

But these seem to be two substantiations of the term, rather than forming a proper definition. What is more likely, given that the term appears in a treaty that is said to have been concluded between the prophet and the people of Yatrib, is that it is being used in the same way it is used in narrating the events of the first civil strife. The *muḥḍit*, in the context of the *ṣaḥīfah*, is the one who severely breaches its code, and thus loses her protection rights, or say, returns to her pre-protection status. Hence the condemnation of aiding her or giving her refuge. Of course, murder and violent acts are among the clearest instances of breaching the code of the *ṣaḥīfah*, but they should not be used interchangeably with *ḥadaṭs*. In all cases, and contrary to some *ḥadīṭ* commentators,¹¹⁰ *ḥadaṭ* in the *ṣaḥīfah*, or in *ḥadīṭs* derived from the *ṣaḥīfah*, has nothing to do with religious innovation.

The *ḥadīṭ* of the pool¹¹¹ should also be understood in the same terms. Although there is no pact or pledge here, there is still the status of companionship. The prophet is

¹⁰⁹ “*Man ḡalada bi-ḡayri ḥaddin aw qatala bi-ḡayri ḥaqq;*” ‘Abd ar-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, §18848. ‘Abd ar-Razzāq narrates this directly from Ma‘mar. Aṣ-Ṣādiq narrates the *ḥadīṭ* without mentioning its transmitters.

¹¹⁰ Cf. al-‘Aynī, *‘Umdah*, 10:233 (where *ḥadaṭ* is understood as religious innovation, but injustice is also offered as an alternative meaning); Ibn Ḥaḡar, *Fath*, 4:84 (where *ḥadaṭ* is indecisively understood as injustice); and Abū Zakariyyā Muḡyī ad-Dīn an-Nawawī, *Ṣarḥ an-Nawawī* [‘alā “*Ṣaḥīḥ*” *Muslim* = *al-Minhāḡ*], in the lower margins of *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, by Muslim b. al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ al-Quṣayrī, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Dār Iḡyā’ at-Turāṭ al-‘Arabī, 1972), 9:144 (where *ḥadaṭ* is understood as sin (*ḍanb*)). Injustice, for that matter, may be seen also as another substantiation of the term. Among modern scholars, Serjeant translates *muḥḍit* as aggressor/innovator. He comments by saying, “*Muḥḍit* is somebody who introduces a new element into a situation, which is therefore bad;” Serjeant, “*Sunnah Jāmi‘ah*,” 24.

¹¹¹ See p. 98 above.

surprised that his companions are being taken away from him, but a (divine) voice clarifies that they *aḥdaṭū*. *Iḥdāṭ* is again revoking a certain status, and causing the return to a previous status, in this case to the pre-companionship status. This is even exemplified in physical terms in some versions where the divine voice adds: “[For] they retreated backwards retracing [their steps].”¹¹² This can hardly be understood to do with innovation.¹¹³

Now we come to al-ʿIrbād’s *ḥadīṭ*.¹¹⁴ As we have seen the segment on *muḥdaṭāt* is contrasted with the segment on obedience. No word would be more fitting to summarize the Umayyad ideology on the ideal relationship between the ruler and his subjects than obedience.¹¹⁵ The pledge of allegiance (*bayʿah*) is reduced by the Umayyads to a pledge of obedience, or at least understood by them as such. If this is the case, then disobedience amounts to revoking the pledge. Understanding *muḥdaṭah*, being the passive participle of *aḥdaṭa*, as an act that would revoke the protection rights offered by the community seems to be, in the context of Umayyad Syria, well suited to maintain the contrast with obedience,

¹¹² “*Inna-humu rtaddū ‘alā adbārihimu l-qahqarā;*” al-Buḥārī, *Ġāmiʿ*, §6586. This expression is also found in many of the versions mentioned in n. 81, p. 98 above.

¹¹³ Cf. al-ʿAynī, *ʿUmdah*, 24:166 (where *aḥdaṭū* is understood as creating things that God does not permit, to the extent that “all people of religious innovations and injustice are included”); Ibn Ḥaḡar, *Fath*, 11:385-6; and an-Nawawī, *Šarḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 3:136-7 (where in both different interpretations are offered including *ḥadaṭ* as a great sin (*kabīrah*), and *ḥadaṭ* as a religious innovation).

¹¹⁴ See p. 67 above.

¹¹⁵ See Kadi, “Religious Foundation,” 231-73.

which is suggested by the structure of the *ḥadīṭ*. If *muḥdaṭah* is understood as an innovation, the contrast would be completely lost.

D. “Whoever Aḥdaṭa in This Matter of Ours”

We are left with only one *ḥadīṭ* among those by which we started this excursion.¹¹⁶ This *ḥadīṭ* deserves a special treatment since its employment of the verb *aḥdaṭa* seems quite different from all other *ḥadīṭs*. The common link in this *ḥadīṭ*’s chains of transmitters is Sa’d b. Ibrāhīm,¹¹⁷ who narrates the *ḥadīṭ* on the authority of al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad, who narrates it on the authority of his aunt ‘Ā’īṣah, the wife of the prophet. Three people are said to have heard the *ḥadīṭ* from Sa’d b. Ibrāhīm, namely, Ibrāhīm b. Sa’d,¹¹⁸ ‘Abd Allāh b. Ġa’far,¹¹⁹ and ‘Abd al-Wāḥid b. Abī ‘Awn.¹²⁰ This is important because the word *aḥdaṭa* appears only in Ibrāhīm b. Sa’d’s version, while in ‘Abd al-Wāḥid’s it is replaced with *fa’ala*,

¹¹⁶ See the *ḥadīṭ* that corresponds to n. 79, p. 97 above.

¹¹⁷ Az-Zuhri is given also as a narrator of the *ḥadīṭ* as in ad-Dāraquṭnī, *Sunan*, §4535, but ad-Dāraquṭnī comments that is a grave mistake, meaning that it is a mistake committed by one of the later narrators. This, however, does not have to be a mistake, since Sa’d b. Ibrāhīm belongs to the *banū Zuhrah*. True, though, that “az-Zuhri” when standing alone is usually reserved to Ibn Šihāb az-Zuhri.

¹¹⁸ Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, §§26561, 26860; al-Buḥārī, *Ġāmi’*, §2697; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, §4513; Ibn Mājah, *Sunan*, §14; Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, §4606; ad-Dāraquṭnī, *Sunan*, §4534.

¹¹⁹ Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, §§24954, 25641, 25986, 26721; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, §4514; Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, §4606; ad-Dāraquṭnī, *Sunan*, §4537.

¹²⁰ Ad-Dāraquṭnī, *Sunan*, §4536.

and in ‘Abd Allāh’s with *‘amila* in some versions¹²¹ and with *ṣana‘a* in others.¹²² The three verbs in the other versions all mean the same, that is, to do or to make. Given that Ibrāhīm b. Sa‘d died in 183/799,¹²³ this *ḥadīṭ* cannot be used as an attestation of an early condemnation of *iḥdāt* in the sense of religious innovation, as he might be the one responsible for the wording of the *ḥadīṭ*.

Furthermore, some versions of the *ḥadīṭ* provide us with a context that would deem any interpretation of the *ḥadīṭ* as a condemnation of religious innovation quite implausible. “This matter of ours” (*amrunā hādā*) seems to be referring specifically to bequests and distribution of inheritance.¹²⁴ What the prophet is allegedly warning against is any distribution of money upon death that does not abide by *ṣari‘ah* as highlighted in the Qur’ān.

E. Some Other Uses of Aḥdata Signifying the Idea of Newness

So far, we have established that in all early traditions where there is a condemnation of *ḥadaṭ* and *iḥdāt*, religious innovation was not intended. Nevertheless, as we have said, the terms *did* acquire the sense of newness and novelty from an earlier stage. But it seems that

¹²¹ Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, §§25641, 25986, 26721; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, §4514; ad-Dāraquṭnī, *Sunan*, §4537.

¹²² Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, §24954; Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, §4606.

¹²³ Ad-Dahabī, *Siyar*, 8:307.

¹²⁴ In one version, this is explicitly mentioned in the *ḥadīṭ*; see ad-Dāraquṭnī, *Sunan*, §4535. In another version, this is the context in which al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad transmitted the *ḥadīṭ*; see Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, §§25641, 26721; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, §4514.

whenever they were used in that sense in the early stages, (1) the original sense, suggested by Ġabal, was still present, and (2) they were used in value-free contexts. Here are three of the most relevant examples:

(1) We read in the Qur'ān:

Do not expel [divorced women] from their homes, nor should they leave their homes, unless they commit a flagrant indecency. These are the bounds of God, and whoso violates God's bounds does himself an injustice. You never know; God may afterwards bring about a change of circumstance.¹²⁵

Given the context, Khalidi rightly renders *yuhḍiṭu amrā* in the verse as “bring about a change of circumstance.” Clearly something new is anticipated, but the original sense of revoking is still there. The act is attributed to God; therefore, the value issue is irrelevant.

(2) When al-Walīd b. 'Uqbah, the governor of Kūfah for 'Uṭmān, reportedly did not come on time to lead the prayer, 'Abd Allāh b. Mas'ūd led the prayer himself. When al-Walīd came, he reportedly asked Ibn Mas'ūd,

Did an order (*ḥadaṭ*) come to you from the commander of the faithful or did you act independently (*ibtada'ta*)?¹²⁶

Interestingly, *ḥadaṭ* is contrasted here with *bid'ah*. Clearly, *ibtada'a* here means acting independently. *Ḥadaṭ*, however, seems to signify a new order or decree, but it still carries

¹²⁵ “*Lā tuḥriḡūhunna min buyūtihinna wa-lā yaḥruḡna illā an ya'tina bi-fāḥiṣatin mubayyinatīn wa-tilka ḥudūdu l-Lāhi wa-man yata'adda ḥudūda l-Lāhi fa-qad ḡalama nafsahū lā tadri la'alla l-Lāha yuhḍiṭu ba'da ḡālīka amrā*,” Qur'ān 65:1.

¹²⁶ “*A-ḡā'aka min amīri l-mu'minīna ḥadaṭun ami btada't*,” 'Abd ar-Razzāq, *Muṣannaḡ*, §3790. Also found in Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, §4298 (where *ḥadaṭ* is replaced with *amr*); aṭ-Ṭabarānī, *al-Mu'ḡam al-kabīr*, §9500; al-Bayhaqī, *Sunan*, §5313; and Ibn 'Asākir, *Tārīḡ*, 35:63 (where *ḥadaṭ* is also replaced with *amr*).

the original sense, for such a decree would involve discharging al-Walīd from his office. No value is assigned to the act.

(3) It is reported that in the reign of ‘Umar I (r. 13-23/634-644), Abū Mūsā al-Aṣṣārī, a companion of the prophet, was answering questions pertaining to some pilgrimage rituals when a man told him,

Withhold some of your responses (*futyā*), for you do not know what the commander of the faithful introduced (*aḥḍaṭa*) into the rites in your absence.¹²⁷

Aḥḍaṭa here signifies introducing something new. According to our sources, the new thing introduced by ‘Umar was the abolition of one alternative form of pilgrimage. In that sense, the original sense of revoking is still present here. On the other hand, it seems, at least for those circulating this report, that such a *ḥadaṭ*, although not in accordance with the tradition received from the prophet, was considered binding during ‘Umar’s reign. Hence, *ḥadaṭ*, in this context, was not negatively perceived.

In summary, wherever one finds a condemnation of *ḥadaṭ* and *iḥḍāṭ* in the early tradition, religious innovation was not intended. On the other hand, wherever one finds *ḥadaṭ* and *iḥḍāṭ* being used in the early tradition to signify newness and novelty, no condemnation is attested. The condemnation of *ḥadaṭ* and *iḥḍāṭ* as being related to religious innovation seems

¹²⁷ “*Ruwayḍaka bi-ba’ḍi futyāka fa-inna-ka lā tadri mā aḥḍaṭa amīru l-mu’minīna fi n-nusuki ba’dak;*” Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, §351. The report appears also with some variations in Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, §§273, 19734, 19763, 19777, 19907; al-Buḥārī, *Ġāmi’*, §§1559, 1565, 1724, 1795, 4346, 4397; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, §§2929-33; Ibn Māğah, *Sunan*, §2979; an-Nasā’ī, *Sunan*, 5:153-4. Cf. Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, §342.

to be a result of the association established in the axiomatic statement, “every *muḥdatah* is a *bid‘ah*,” between *ḥadaṭ* and *bid‘ah*, and the way *bid‘ah* came to be perceived, as being explored in this dissertation. In other words, the independent condemnation of *ḥadaṭ* in the early tradition should not be seen as jeopardizing the results we are achieving in our attempt at constructing the history of *bid‘ah*.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE EMERGENCE OF TEMPORALITY

In the previous chapter we discussed the emergence of the *sunnah-bid'ah* dichotomy. Although *bid'ah*, with the establishment of the dichotomy, started to acquire a negative overtone, the element of temporality was still missing. In other words, the concept of *bid'ah* was still understood in terms of uniqueness and independence, in a continuation of its original linguistic sense, but the nature of this independence became specified in a way that bestowed value on what would be otherwise a value-free concept. Nevertheless, we have plenty of reports from the last third of the first century and the first third of the second century that would indicate condemnations of acts, ideas, and principles on the mere grounds of being innovative. The term *bid'ah* started to be used pejoratively to describe such acts and ideas. This took place in three fields: legal practice, theology, and jurisprudence. But as we will show in this chapter and the next, *bid'ah*, in its temporal sense and as a basis for condemnation, was used to signify very specific acts and ideas within these domains. Within legal practice, it was used solely in the field of rituals. In theology, it was used only in referring to the idea of free will, or what came to be known as *qadar*, or more accurately, denying *qadar*.¹ In jurisprudence, it was used only in referring to the

¹ While *qadar* means predestination, the term *qadari* is used usually to refer to the person who denies predestination.

practice of applying *ra'y* (a term in much need for explanation to avoid errors as we shall see) as a method for deciding on legal matters.

In this chapter, we aim at three things: (1) providing an account for the emergence of temporality as a defining attribute of *bid'ah*; (2) proving that *bid'ah* in this new acquired sense was used specifically in the areas mentioned above (rituals, *qadar*), but we will have to leave *ra'y* to the next chapter; and (3) accounting for this restrictive use. We will proceed by discussing the use of *bid'ah* in the fields of law and theology in this order as it represents roughly the chronological order for the emergence of temporality in defining *bid'ah*. Then we will draw some general conclusions. We will leave the emergence of *bid'ah* in the field of jurisprudence to the next chapter, as it seems the most crucial step for providing the *bid'ah* with its lasting definition.

I. The Emergence of Temporal Bid'ah in Legal Practice

What were the practices that were considered *bid'i* practices in early Islam? We do not mean here practices that were deemed as *bid'ah* but were still seen in positive terms such as *tarāwīḥ* prayers which we have discussed in chapter two.² We are more concerned here with practices that were condemned specifically for being *bid'ah*. Here is an exhaustive list of those practices of which we have some sort of attestation for early condemnation:³

(1) Performing prayers in replacement of those missed due to being in the menstruating period: It is narrated that 'Aṭā' (d. 114-5/732-3) and 'Ikrimah (d. 105/723-

² See pp. 55ff. above.

³ By "early condemnation" we mean any condemnation coming from the Umayyad era.

4), in two different accounts, considered that *bid'ah*.⁴ Some reports indicate that this was the practice of certain groups among the Ḥārīğites.⁵ This practice was not endorsed by any later school of law (including Ibādī school of law).⁶

(2) Saying, “Prayer is better than sleeping” (*aṣ-ṣalātu hayrun mina n-nawm*) in the morning call for prayer: ‘Umar b. Ḥaḥṣ (of uncertain dates) reportedly claims that his grandfather, Sa’d b. Abī Waqqāṣ (d. ca. 54/674), the prophet’s companion, was the first to introduce this practice during ‘Umar’s reign (13-23/634-644), but he left it later due to the fact that “it is a *bid'ah*.”⁷ Nevertheless, there are several prophetic reports, mostly with weak *sanads*, that indicate that this was a practice that goes back to the prophet’s time;

⁴ ‘Abd ar-Razzāq b. Hammām aṣ-Ṣan‘ānī, *al-Muṣannaf*, 2nd ed., ed. Ḥabīb ar-Raḥmān al-A‘zamī (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1983), §§1275-6.

⁵ This what can be understood from the answer of ‘Āiṣah, the prophet’s wife, to a woman who asked her specifically about this issue, as narrated by Mu‘āḍah al-‘Adawiyyah (d. 83/702) of Basra, a center for Ḥārīğites at the time; ‘Abd ar-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, §1277-8; Abū Bakr ibn Abī Ṣaybah, *al-Muṣannaf*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Awwāmah (Jeddah: Dār al-Qiblah, and Damascus: Mu‘assasat ‘Ulūm al-Qur‘ān, 2006), §§7315-6; Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad al-imām Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal*, ed. Abū al-Ma‘āṭī an-Nūrī et al. (Beirut: ‘Ālam al-Kutub, 1998), §§24537, 25140, 25167, 25398-9, 25622, 26036, 26477-8; Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl al-Buḥārī, *al-Ġāmi‘ aṣ-ṣaḥīḥ al-musnad*, Edited by Muḥibb ad-Dīn al-Ḥaṭīb, Muḥammad Fu‘ād ‘Abd al-Bāqī, and Quṣayy Muḥibb ad-Dīn al-Ḥaṭīb (Cairo: al-Maṭba‘ah as-Salafiyyah, 1979), §321; Muslim b. al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ al-Quṣayrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, ed. Muḥammad Fu‘ād ‘Abd al-Bāqī (Cairo: Dār Iḥyā’ al-Kutub al-‘Arabiyyah, 1955-6), §687-9. See also Abū al-Walīd ibn Ruṣd, *Bidāyat al-muḡtahid wa-nihāyat al-muqtaṣid* (Tehran: al-Maḡma‘ al-‘Ālamī li-t-Taqrīb bayna al-Maḍāhib al-Islāmiyyah, 2009), 1:169.

⁶ See Ibn Ruṣd, *Bidāyat al-muḡtahid*, 1:169, and editor’s note therein. For Ibādīs, see Ḥamīs b. Sa‘īd aṣ-Ṣiqṣī, *Makhaḡ aṭ-ṭālibin wa-balāḡ ar-rāḡibin*, 2nd ed., ed. Sālīm b. Ḥamad b. Sulaymān al-Ḥārītī (Cairo: ‘Īsā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1993), 3:220.

⁷ ‘Abd ar-Razzāq, *al-Muṣannaf*, §1829.

others indicate that it was added later, without necessarily condemning it or labeling it as *bid'ah*.⁸ The four major Sunnī schools of law considered the practice to be recommended,⁹ while Ibādī and the different Šī'ite schools of law agree that it is not recommendable, to say the least.¹⁰

(3) A practice called *tatwīb* in the call for prayer: *Tatwīb* is often confused with the previous practice.¹¹ But in a report that is attributed to 'Abd Allāh b. 'Umar (d. 73/693) where he accused a man who was doing *tatwīb* of being a *mubtadi'*,¹² it seems to be referring to what is known as *targī'* (the repetition of the two Islamic testimonies in the call for prayer). Interestingly, 'Abd ar-Raḥmān b. Abī Laylā (d. 83/702) seems to endorse the

⁸ For such conflicting reports, see 'Abd ar-Razzāq, *al-Muṣannaf*, §§1820-30; and Ibn Abī Šaybah, *Muṣannaf*, §§2170-2181.

⁹ 'Abd al-Wahhāb Ḥallāf, *al-Fiqh 'alā al-maḍāhib al-arba'ah* (Cairo: Maṭābi' aš-Ša'b, n.d.), 159. Although this seems to be the position of later Šāfi'ites who decided to follow an "old" opinion of aš-Šāfi'i, the latter himself seems to have changed his mind on the issue; see Muḥammad b. Idrīs aš-Šāfi'i, *al-Umm*, ed. Muḥammad Zuhri an-Naḡḡār (Cairo: Maktabat al-Kulliyyāt al-Azhariyyah, 1961), 1:85 and the editor's footnote therein.

¹⁰ See 'Abd Allāh ibn Miftāḥ, *K. al-Muntaza' al-muḥtār min al-ḡayt al-midrār al-mufattiḥ li-kamā'im "al-Azhār fī fiqh al-a'immah al-aṭhār,"* being a commentary on Ibn al-Murtaḍā's *Azhār* (Šan'a': Maṭba'at al-Ma'ahid al-Ilmiyyah, 1923), 1:224; the editor's note in Ibn Rušd, *Bidāyat al-muḡtahid*, 1:297; and Abū Ġānim Bišr b. Ġānim al-Ḥurāsānī, *al-Mudawwanah al-kubrā*, commented upon by Muḥammad b. Yūsuf Aṭṭafayyīš, ed. Muṣṭafā b. Šāliḥ Bāḡū (Muscat: Wizārat at-Turāt wa-t-Taḡāfah, 2007), 1:204 and editor's note therein.

¹¹ It seems that the practice called *tatwīb* in early *ḥadīṭ* collections, such as 'Abd ar-Razzaq's *Muṣannaf* and Ibn Abī Šaybah's *Muṣannaf*, is what *fuqahā'* later call *targī'*, preserving the former term to the previous practice.

¹² 'Abd ar-Razzāq, *al-Muṣannaf*, §1832.

practice while calling it a *bid'ah*.¹³ *Targī'* is considered a recommended practice for the Mālikites and Šāfi'ites only.¹⁴

(4) Situating the chins between the legs during the obligatory bowing in prayer: It is narrated that 'Aṭā' (d. 114-5/732-3) considered that to be a *bid'ah* that previous generations did not use to do.¹⁵ The mentioned practice is not recommended by any later school of law.

(5) Not changing the direction of the face and body immediately after finishing the prayer: This is applied specifically to the *imām* of the prayer, and it is considered a *bid'ah* by aš-Ša'bī (d. between 103/721 and 110/728) and 'Ubaydah b. 'Amr (d. 72/691-2) in two independent reports.¹⁶ 'Ubaydah is said to have been condemning the practice of Muṣ'ab b. az-Zubayr (d. 72/691), seemingly during his government of Iraq.¹⁷ Related to this practice is the demand that the *ma'mūm* (the follower in the prayer) should wait until the *imām* changes his direction if he has to make up for missed parts of the prayer. Different early scholars have different opinions on the matter given that changing the *imām*'s

¹³ Ibn Abī Šaybah, *Muṣannaf*, §2183.

¹⁴ Al-Ḥasan b. Yūsuf b. al-Muṭahḥar al-Ḥillī, *Tadkīrat al-fuqahā'* (Qom: Mu'assasat Āl al-Bayt 'Alayhim as-Salām li-Iḥyā' at-Turāt, AH 1414), 3:45-47; Ḥallāf, *Fiqh*, 159.

¹⁵ 'Abd ar-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, §2858; cf. §2857.

¹⁶ 'Abd ar-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, §§3159, 3226; Ibn Abī Šaybah, *Muṣannaf*, §3142.

¹⁷ 'Abd ar-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, §3226; cf. Ibn Abī Šaybah, *Muṣannaf*, §3119, where it seems that 'Ubaydah's condemnation pertains to certain phrases of God's glorification that Muṣ'ab used to utter after finishing the prayer; see the next practice.

direction is a recommended act if not obligatory.¹⁸ Interestingly, in one report, it is said that in Medina, people used to wait for the *imām* because they “were afraid of the sword”.¹⁹

(6) Uttering some phrases that glorify God after the prayer: It seems that this is condemned when the *imām* raises his voice with such phrases in a way that may confuse his followers and make them think that these phrases are part of the obligatory prayer. Labeling such a practice as *bidʿah* is attributed to Abū al-Baḥtārī (d. 82/701).²⁰ Ibrāhīm an-Naḥaʿī (d. ca. 96/717) reportedly showed also his contempt for the practice by saying that “those who came earlier... did not do that,”²¹ which amounts to saying that the practice is a *bidʿah* (in the technical sense) but without using the term. ʿUbaydah b. ʿAmr (d. 72/691-2) reportedly condemned Muṣʿab b. az-Zubayr (d. 72/691) for uttering such phrases which he labeled as *bidaʿ*.²² Related to this is the practice of standing up after finishing the prayer and performing supplication while facing the *qiblah*. While most early reports condemn the practice for being an act of imitation of the Jewish practice,²³ it is reported that ʿAbd Allāh

¹⁸ See ʿAbd ar-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, §§3155-9; Ibn Abī Šaybah, *Muṣannaf*, §§3138-3147.

¹⁹ ʿAbd ar-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, §3158; cf. Ibn Abī Šaybah, *Muṣannaf*, §3145, where the same report is mentioned without mentioning the sword.

²⁰ Ibn Abī Šaybah, *Muṣannaf*, §3123.

²¹ Ibn Abī Šaybah, *Muṣannaf*, §3122.

²² Ibn Abī Šaybah, *Muṣannaf*, §3145. Cf. n. 19, p. 119, and the text accompanying it above.

²³ See the collection of reports in Ibn Abī Šaybah, *Muṣannaf*, §§8536-42.

b. Mas'ūd (d. 32/652-3), the prophet's companion, labeled it as *bid'ah*.²⁴ However, there is a missing link in the *sanad* of this Kūfī *atar*.

(7) The *ḍuḥā* prayer: While there are several reports that indicate that it was recommended by the prophet,²⁵ other reports indicate that it was not practiced nor recommended by the him.²⁶ Interestingly, although many of these reports indicate that the prophet did not practice it, they still endorse the practice. One of these reports labels it a *bid'ah*, but adds, “What an excellent *bid'ah* it is!”²⁷ in what reminds us with 'Umar's comment on *tarāwīḥ* being a *bid'ah*.²⁸ In that sense, it should not have been included in the list, had it not been for a very few reports showing some contempt for the practice. This can be understood from a report that is narrated on the authority of Qays b. 'Abd[ah] (of uncertain dates, but he is the uncle of aš-Ša'bī, who died sometime between 103/721 and 110/728) describing the practice of 'Abd Allāh b. Mas'ūd (d. 32/652-3).²⁹ Moreover, it seems that the early Šī'ite *imāms* were quite dismissive concerning this practice.³⁰ Interestingly, sources

²⁴ Ibn Abī Šaybah, *Muṣannaf*, §8539.

²⁵ See, e.g., al-Buḥārī, *Ḥadīth*, §§1178, 1981; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, §§1618-20.

²⁶ See 'Abd ar-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, §§4862-75; and Ibn Abī Šaybah, *Muṣannaf*, §§7857-7902.

²⁷ “*Wa-ni'mati l-bid'ah*,” Ibn Abī Šaybah, *Muṣannaf*, §7859.

²⁸ See pp. 55ff. above.

²⁹ 'Abd ar-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, §4875.

³⁰ Muḥammad b. Ya'qūb al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, 3rd ed. (Qom: Dār al-Ḥadīth, AH 1434), §§5593-4.

indicate that this prayer was known to Qurayš in pre-Islamic times, and that the prophet used to pray it before the five daily prayers were prescribed.³¹ Most later schools of law consider it a recommended practice, but the Imāmīs and other Šī‘ites consider it uncommendable being an innovation.³²

(8) A supplication (*du‘ā*) that used to be recited in Mecca after *tarāwīḥ* prayers in Ramaḍān: This is considered *bid‘ah* by ‘Aṭā’ (d. 114-5/732-3).³³ No mention of such a prayer in books of law.

(9) Raising the hands and performing the *qunūt* supplication (*du‘a*) within Friday prayer: This is considered *bid‘ah* by Ibrāhīm an-Naḥa‘ī (d. ca. 96/717) and Ṭāwūs (d. 106/725) according to two independent reports.³⁴ Most schools of law agree on that, but the Imāmīs consider *qunūt* to be a recommended practice in Friday prayer, as well as in every other prayer.³⁵ Although there is a disagreement on *qunūt* in other prayers, such as

³¹ Ġawād ‘Alī, *Tārīḥ aṣ-ṣalāh fī al-Islām* (Baghdad: Maṭba‘at Dīyā’, [1968]), 11.

³² Ḥallāf, *Fiqh*, 171; Muḥammad b. ‘Alī aš-Šawkānī, *Nayl al-awṭār šarḥ “Muntaqā al-aḥbār” min aḥādīṯ sayyid al-aḥyār*, ed. ‘Iṣām ad-Dīn aṣ-Šabābiṭī (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīṯ, 1993), 3:76; Ġa‘far as-Subḥānī, *al-Bid‘ah: mafhūmuhā, ḥadduhā, āṭāruhā* (Beirut: Dār al-Aḍwā’, 1998), 172-3.

³³ ‘Abd ar-Razzāq, *Muṣannaḥ*, §5000.

³⁴ ‘Abd ar-Razzāq, *Muṣannaḥ*, §5289; Ibn Abī Šaybah, *Muṣannaḥ*, §§5455, 5457.

³⁵ Ibn Rušd, *Bidāyat al-muḡtahid*, 1:364-7, and the editor’s notes.

morning prayer and late night *witr* prayer, only *qunūt* in Friday prayer is included here since there is no indication of labeling the practice in general as *bid'ah*.³⁶

(10) Voluntarily meeting among people to praise God in certain agreed-upon times: It is narrated that 'Abd Allāh b. Mas'ūd (d. 32/652-3) condemned this practice and called it a *bid'ah*.³⁷ Such a practice would be among what later Ḥanbalites would condemn, but most other schools would tolerate.³⁸

(11) Women escorting the deceased to the grave in funerals: This is a *bid'ah* according to aš-Ša'bī (d. between 103/721 and 110/728).³⁹ Most schools of law would agree that it is either forbidden or not recommendable, but they base their ruling upon several *ḥadīths* that would indicate that, and not on the mere fact of being a *bid'ah*.⁴⁰

³⁶ On *qunūt*, see Suliman Bashear, "Qunūt in Tafsīr and Ḥadīth Literature," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 19(1995): 36-65; and Najam Haider, *Origins of the Shī'a: Identity, Ritual, and Sacred Space in Eighth-Century Kūfa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 95-137.

³⁷ 'Abd ar-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, §§5409-10.

³⁸ See n. 91, p. 52 above.

³⁹ 'Abd ar-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, §6296.

⁴⁰ See Šihāb ad-Dīn ibn Ḥağar al-'Asqalānī, *Fath al-bārī bi-šarḥ "Ṣaḥīḥ" al-imām Abī 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Ismā'il al-Buḥārī*, 3rd ed., ed. Muḥib ad-Dīn al-Ḥaṭīb, 'Abd al-'Azīz ibn Bāz, and Muḥammad Fu'ād 'Abd al-Bāqī (Cairo: al-Maktabah as-Salafiyyah, 1987), 3:148-9. Similarly, Šī'ite *ḥadīths* seem to agree also that escorting the deceased is recommended only for men, with some of the reports indicate that it is not forbidden; see Ismā'il Mu'izzī al-Malāyirī, *Ġāmi' aḥādīṭ aš-šī'ah*, 2nd ed., under the supervision of Ḥusayn al-Burūğirdī (Qom: Ismā'il Mu'izzī al-Malāyirī, AH 1422), 3:500-511.

(12) Man standing upon the grave until the dead body is buried: This is a *bid'ah* according to a report attributed to Abū Qilābah (d. 104/722-3).⁴¹ Most later scholars, however, do not share this opinion.⁴²

(13) Standing during circumambulation around the Ka'bah: It is reported that Ibn Ğurayġ (d. 150/768), after narrating that Ibn 'Umar (d. 73/693) never did that, considered it to be possibly a *bid'ah*.⁴³ Most schools of law do not see a problem in that, but there is a disagreement over whether one, in the case of taking a long stand, must restart the seven circumambulations or can continue from the point she has reached.⁴⁴

(14) Raising (or lowering) the voice when uttering the *basmalah* in prayer: It is reported that Ibrāhīm an-Naḥa'ī (d. ca. 96/717) considered raising the voice with the *basmalah* as *bid'ah*.⁴⁵ We have conflicting reports on the practice of the prophet and his companions and their followers, and it seems that the practice of Medina (and hence the

⁴¹ 'Abd ar-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, §6318; Ibn Abī Šaybah, *Muṣannaf*, §11882.

⁴² The assumption made by most later scholars is that the prophet used to stand up in funerals and that he recommended the act, but later, in his lifetime, this was abrogated. But most agree that the abrogation meant simply that the act is not recommended anymore rather than being forbidden. For a full discussion, see Abū 'Umar Yūsuf ibn 'Abd al-Barr, *at-Tamhīd li-mā fi "al-Muwaṭṭa'" min al-ma'ānī wa-l-asānīd*, ed. Sa'īd Aḥmad A'rāb (Rabat: Wizārat al-Awqāf wa-š-Šu'ūn al-Islāmiyyah, 1967-1992), 23:260-270, especially 268, where Ibn 'Abd al-Barr comments on Abū Qilābah's *atar*.

⁴³ 'Abd ar-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, §8983. This seems to be Ibn Ğurayġ's comment; nevertheless, Ibn Ḥaġar ascribes the comment to Nafi', Ibn Ğurayġ's informant of this report; cf. Ibn Ḥaġar, *Fath*, 3:484.

⁴⁴ Ibn Ḥaġar, *Fath*, 3:484.

⁴⁵ Ibn Abī Šaybah, *Muṣannaf*, §4166.

Mālikite's) was not to utter the *basmalah* at all, while the practice of Kūfah (and hence the Ḥanafite's) was to utter it without raising the voice, while the practice of Mecca (and hence the Šāfi'ite's) was to utter it without raising the voice in *ẓuhr* and *‘aṣr* (and other daytime prayers), and to raise the voice in *fağr* and night prayers.⁴⁶ The Šī'ites on the other hand, from early on, chose to raise the voice with *basmalah* in all prayers, and this became one of their identity markers.⁴⁷

(15) Calling for the feast (*‘īd*) prayers by means of *aḍān*: This is considered *bid‘ah* by aš-Ša‘bī (d. between 103/721 and 110/728) and al-Ḥakam b. ‘Uṭaybah (d. 115/733).⁴⁸ This is not a practice that is followed by any later school of law,⁴⁹ but it seems that it was practiced by several caliphs and governors in the Umayyad era.⁵⁰ One report claims that the first governor to practice this was Ziyād b. Abīh (aka Ziyād b. Abī Sufyān, d. 53/673).⁵¹

⁴⁶ For the different early positions, see ‘Abd ar-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, §§2596-2621; and Ibn Abī Šaybah, *Muṣannaf*, §§4151-86. For later legal positions, see Ibn Rušd, *Bidāyat al-muğtahid*, 1:345-8.

⁴⁷ For a full discussion on *basmalah* as an identity marker for the Šī'ites, see Haider, *Origins*, 57-94.

⁴⁸ Ibn Abī Šaybah, *Muṣannaf*, §5715; cf. *ibid.*, §§5711-2.

⁴⁹ Ibn Rušd, *Bidāyat al-muğtahid*, 2:111.

⁵⁰ C. H. Becker argues that this innovation was undertaken by the Umayyads as part of their effort “to transfer the form of the Friday ritual onto that of the feasts as well;” C. H. Becker, “On the History of Muslim Worship,” in *The Development of Islamic Ritual*, ed. Gerald Hawting (New York: Routledge, 2016), 51.

⁵¹ Ibn Abī Šaybah, *Muṣannaf*, §5716; cf. *ibid.*, §5706.

Another ascribes it to Ibn az-Zubayr (d. 73/692).⁵² We have also one report ascribing it to Mu‘āwiyah (r. 41-60/661-80).⁵³ These reports do not need to be contradictory; they may reflect the different situations in Kūfah (or Basra), Mecca, and Damascus respectively. It seems that it was never practiced in Medina.⁵⁴ In Mecca, the report on Ibn az-Zubayr is telling. It says that Ibn az-Zubayr was following the opinion of Ibn ‘Abbās (d. 68/687-8) in not performing *adān* for ‘īd, “until things went bad [that is, politically] between them,”⁵⁵ so he started the practice. ‘Īd prayers are important from the political perspective, and by imposing the *adān* contrary to Ibn ‘Abbās’s position, Ibn az-Zubayr was in fact claiming his absolute authority over religious (and hence political) matters in Mecca.

(16) The first call (*adān*) for prayer on Friday: It is narrated that Ibn ‘Umar (d. 73/693), the prophet’s companion, considered this a *bid‘ah*.⁵⁶ This is included in our list for it is seemingly a condemnation, although some commentators, such as Ibn Ḥağar al-‘Asqalānī (d. 852/1449), say that it does not have to be interpreted as such.⁵⁷ There is

⁵² ‘Abd ar-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, §5628; Ibn Abī Šaybah, *Muṣannaf*, §5710.

⁵³ Ibn Abī Šaybah, *Muṣannaf*, §5712.

⁵⁴ Abū ‘Umar Yūsuf ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, *al-Istidkār al-ğāmi‘ li-maḏāhib fuqahā’ al-amṣār wa-‘ulamā’ al-aqtār fī-mā taḏammanahū “al-Muwaṭṭa” min ma‘ānī ar-ra’y wa-l-āṭār wa-šarḥ ḏālika kullihī bi-l-igāz wa-li-ḥtišār*, 2nd ed., ed. Sālim Muḥammad ‘Aṭā and Muḥammad ‘Alī Mu‘awwaḍ (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 2002), 2:377.

⁵⁵ “*Fa-lammā sā’a mā baynahumā*,” Ibn Abī Šaybah, *Muṣannaf*, §5710; found also (with slight variations) in ‘Abd ar-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, §5628.

⁵⁶ Ibn Abī Šaybah, *Muṣannaf*, §5483.

⁵⁷ Ibn Ḥağar, *Fath*, 2:394.

almost a consensus that this *adān* was introduced in the reign of ‘Utmān (r. 23-35/644-55),⁵⁸ except for one report that attributes to ‘Aṭā’ (d. 114-5/732-3) the claim that it was first introduced by Mu‘āwiyah (r. 41-60/661-80),⁵⁹ a very weak tradition that ascribes that to ‘Umar (r. 13-23/634-644), who is said to have boosted, “We *ibtada’nā* that to account for the increase in Muslim [population],”⁶⁰ and a third report that states that al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ (d. 95/714) was the first to introduce it in Mecca, while Ziyād (d. 53/673) was the first to do that in Basra.⁶¹ Still, most Sunnī schools of law consider it recommended, while Šī‘ites, on the other hand, do not, and some among them would go further by claiming that it is forbidden, given the fact that it is a *bid‘ah*.⁶²

(17) The prostration of gratitude (*saḡdatu š-šukr*): It is narrated that Ibrāhīm an-Naḥa‘ī (d. ca. 96/717) considered it a *bid‘ah*.⁶³ Other than this condemnation, it seems that

⁵⁸ This is based on a report by as-Sā’ib b. Yazīd, that was narrated by az-Zuhri; see Ibn Abī Šaybah, *Muṣannaf*, §2325; Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, §§15807, 15814, 15819; and al-Buḥārī, *Ġāmi‘*, §§912-6. According to as-Sā’ib, this *adān* was introduced in Medina due to population increase.

⁵⁹ Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, *Istiḍkār*, 2:26; cf. Ibn Ḥaḡar, *Fath*, 2:395.

⁶⁰ “*Naḥnu btada’nāhu li-kaṭrati l-muslimin*,” Ibn Ḥaḡar, *Fath*, 2:395. The statement reminds us of ‘Umar’s comment on *tarāwīḥ*’s prayer; see pp. 55ff. above.

⁶¹ Ibn Ḥaḡar, *Fath*, 2:394.

⁶² Ibn Rušd, *Bidāyat al-muḡtahid*, 1:449-51, and the editor’s comments therein.

⁶³ Ibn Abī Šaybah, *Muṣannaf*, §8509; cf. *ibid.* §8507.

most early reports endorse the practice.⁶⁴ Among later scholars, only some Ḥanafites (as expected, given an-Naḥa'ī's condemnation) and most Mālikites (unexpectedly) found it not to be recommendable.⁶⁵

(18) The rest sit (*ğalsatu li-stirāḥah*) in the prayer before standing up and after the second prostration in odd *rak'ahs*: It is reported that 'Abd Allāh b. Mas'ūd (d. 32/652-3) considered that a *bid'ah*,⁶⁶ however, there is a missing link in the *sanad* of this Kūfī *aṭar*. There are not many reports on early opinions and practices, but later scholars are divided on the issue. Šī'ites, Šāfi'ites, and some Ḥanbalites consider it a recommended act, while Mālikites, Ḥanafites, and some Ḥanbalites do not recommend it.⁶⁷

(19) Celebrating 'Arafah's eve (that is, the ninth night of Ḍu l-Ḥiğğah) outside 'Arafah: This is considered *bid'ah* by aš-Ša'bī (d. between 103/721 and 110/728) and al-Ḥakam b. 'Uṭaybah (d. 115/733).⁶⁸ Judging from the large number of early reports, it seems that this was a widely-spread practice from an early period, and that early scholars

⁶⁴ Ibn Abī Šaybah, *Muṣannaf*, §§8498-8511, 23510-24.

⁶⁵ Ḥallāf, *Fiqh*, 249; Badr ad-Dīn al-'Aynī, *Umdat al-qārī šarḥ "Šaḥīḥ" al-Buḥārī* (Cairo: Idārat aṭ-Ṭibā'ah al-Muniriyyah, AH 1348), 18:54.

⁶⁶ Ibn Abī Šaybah, *Muṣannaf*, §30317.

⁶⁷ On this practice, see Ibn Ḥağar, *Fath*, 2:302-3; and Ibn Rušd, *Bidāyat al-muğtahid*, 1:380-1, and the editor's comments therein.

⁶⁸ Ibn Abī Šaybah, *Muṣannaf*, §14487.

were divided on the matter.⁶⁹ Such a practice would be among what later Ḥanbalites would condemn, but most other schools would tolerate.⁷⁰

(20) Being in a state of *iḥrām*, similar to that of a pilgrim, after sending *hady* (sacrificial animal), if one is not to perform pilgrimage: There does not seem a problem in sending *hady* if not performing pilgrimage, but the controversy is over acting or dressing as if one is in a state of *iḥrām*. It is said that when Ibn az-Zubayr (d. 73/692), in Mecca, heard that Ibn ‘Abbās (d. 68/687-8) did that in Basra, he said, “By the Lord of the Ka‘bah, [this] is a *bid‘ah*.”⁷¹ ‘Ā’ishah (d. 58/678), as always, stood up for her nephew, claiming that the prophet never did that.⁷² Among later schools, Šī‘ites, basing themselves on traditions

⁶⁹ ‘Abd ar-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, §§8118-28; Ibn Abī Šaybah, *Muṣannaf*, §§14473-88.

⁷⁰ An example of later Ḥanbalite condemnation of this specific practice can be found in Abū al-‘Abbās Taqī ad-Dīn ibn Taymiyyah, *Iqtidā’ aṣ-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm li-muḥālafat aṣḥāb al-ḡaḥīm*, 7th ed., ed. Nāṣir ‘Abd al-Karīm al-‘Aql (Beirut: Dār ‘Ālam al-Kutub, 1999), 2:149-153. Note, however, that Ibn Taymiyyah differentiates between different means of celebration to account for the reports that would indicate that some companions were involved in celebrating the night outside ‘Arafah.

⁷¹ “*Bid‘atun wa-rabbi l-ka‘bah*,” Ibn Abī Šaybah, *Muṣannaf*, §12868. It is not incomprehensible that the name of Ibn ‘Abbās is hidden in some sources, such as in Mālik’s *Muwaṭṭa’* (§966), given the sensitivity of the issue in the ‘Abbāsīd era.

⁷² Mālik b. Anas, *al-Muwaṭṭa’*, 2nd ed., in the recension of Yaḥyā b. Yaḥyā al-Layṭī, ed. Baššār ‘Awwād Ma‘rūf (Beirut: Dār al-Ġarb al-Islāmī, 1997), §964; cf. *ibid.*, §§965, 969. One must be cautious here. The setting of this story is in the year immediately following the “battle of the camel” that took place between ‘Alī on one side (with Ibn ‘Abbās on his side), and ‘Ā’ishah, Ṭalhah, az-Zubayr, and Ibn az-Zubayr on the other side. After ‘Alī managed to take Basra from his opponents, he appointed Ibn ‘Abbās as its governor, and it is supposedly during his year in office that this story took place. Later, as Ibn ‘Abbās settles in Mecca, both Ibn ‘Abbās and Ibn az-Zubayr would be competing over religious authority in the city. Ibn ‘Abbās is from the *banū Hāšim*, who played important role in administrating pilgrimage rituals in pre-Islamic times. So, this early report can be seen as questioning Ibn ‘Abbās’s supposed (and expected) knowledge of the religious customs,

ascribed to aṣ-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765), consider that by sending *hady*, one becomes in state of *iḥrām* until her *hady* is sacrificed.⁷³ Sunnīs, in general, agree that this is not the case.⁷⁴

(21) Placing one's shoes in front of her in prayer: A quite trivial matter, but we cannot skip it if we aim at exhaustiveness. It is reported that Nāfi' b. Ğubayr (d. 99/717-8) considered that a *bid'ah*.⁷⁵ Nevertheless, the reporter, Mūsā b. 'Ubaydah (d. 152/769), is considered quite untrustworthy. There are a few other reports indicating an alternative recommended practice.⁷⁶

(22) Taking a nap between the recommended and the obligatory morning prayers: It is reported that 'Abd Allāh b. 'Umar (d. 73/693) considered that a *bid'ah*.⁷⁷ Nevertheless, the reporter, Abū aṣ-Ṣiddīq an-Nāġī of Basra (of uncertain dates), is considered quite untrustworthy.⁷⁸

especially as they pertain to pilgrimage, with 'Ā'īshah being the arbitrator. Having said that, we are not suggesting that Ibn 'Abbās and 'Ā'īshah did not take these positions in the matter under question, but we are more skeptical about Ibn az-Zubayr's role and comment, which appear in a report transmitted by known Zubayrids. On Ibn 'Abbās and Ibn az-Zubayr, see the relevant articles in *EI*² written by L. Veccia Vaglieri and H. A. R. Gibb respectively.

⁷³ al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, *K. al-Wāfi*, ed. Ḍiyā' ad-Dīn al-Ḥusaynī (Qom: 'Iṭr 'Itrat, AH 1430), §§14308-14.

⁷⁴ Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, *Istiḍkār*, 4:79-87.

⁷⁵ Ibn Abī Šaybah, *Muṣannaf*, §7981.

⁷⁶ Ibn Abī Šaybah, *Muṣannaf*, §§7979-84.

⁷⁷ Ibn Abī Šaybah, *Muṣannaf*, §6455.

⁷⁸ See Muḥammad b. Sa'd, *aṭ-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, ed. Iḥsān 'Abbās (Beirut: Dār Šādir, 1968), 7:226.

(23) Praying two *rak'ahs* after the late night *witr* prayer: It is reported that this is considered a *bid'ah* by al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr (d. 107/725-6).⁷⁹ There are conflicting early reports on this practice.⁸⁰

(24) Sitting on the pulpit while delivering the Friday sermon: It is reported that Ṭāwūs (d. 106/725) considered that a *bid'ah*.⁸¹ It seems, judging from the available reports, that this was a practice first introduced by Mu'āwiyah (r. 41-60/661-80).⁸² All later schools of law recommend (or require) two sermons delivered while standing up, with a short sit between them,⁸³ *pace* some Ibādīs who recommend having only one sermon delivered while standing up.⁸⁴

(25) Examining people in matters of faith (*miḥnah* or inquisition): It is attributed to aš-Ša'bī (d. between 103/721 and 110/728) and al-Ḥakam b. 'Uṭaybah (d. 115/733)

⁷⁹ Ibn Abī Šaybah, *Muṣannaf*, §6781.

⁸⁰ Ibn Abī Šaybah, *Muṣannaf*, §§6780-8.

⁸¹ Ibn Abī Šaybah, *Muṣannaf*, §5228.

⁸² 'Abd ar-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, §§5258-9, 5264-5, 5271; Ibn Abī Šaybah, *Muṣannaf*, §§5222-3, 5236. There are also some indications that 'Uṭmān and Ibn az-Zubayr used to do that albeit not constantly; see 'Abd ar-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, §§5258, 5266, 5268.

⁸³ Ibn Rušd, *Bidāyat al-muḡtahid*, 1:457-60, and editor's notes therein.

⁸⁴ Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Aṭfīs, *Šarḥ "K. an-Nīl wa-šifā' al-'alīl,"* being a commentary on *K. an-Nīl wa-šifā' al-'alīl* by Ḍiyā' ad-Dīn 'Abd al-'Azīz aṭ-Ṭamīnī, 2nd ed. (Jeddah: Maktabat al-Iršād, and Beirut: Dār al-Fatḥ, 1973), 2:339-40.

that the *miḥnah* is a *bid'ah*.⁸⁵ The matter seems to reflect the *miḥnah* induced by Ḥalid al-Qasrī during his government of Iraq (ca. 105-120/724-738).⁸⁶

(26) Shaving the head as a means of punishment: It is narrated that aš-Ša'bī (d. between 103/721 and 110/728) considered that a *bid'ah*.⁸⁷ There are many instances in literary and historical works for using this as a means of punishment during the Umayyad era (including Ibn az-Zubayr's caliphate).⁸⁸

(27) Divorcing trice in one utterance or divorcing while the wife is in her period: These types of divorce are named in all sources collectively as the “divorce of *bid'ah*”.⁸⁹ It is narrated that 'Imrān b. Ḥuṣayn (d. 52/673) called it as such, so did Šurayḥ the judge (d. ca. 78/697).⁹⁰ Other forms of divorce that do not follow the recommended way for divorce are called as such also. That such forms of divorce are forbidden or at least not recommendable is agreed upon. Nevertheless, later schools of law differ on whether they should be considered as valid as three utterances of divorce in three different settings, or

⁸⁵ 'Abd ar-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, §18790; Ibn Abī Šaybah, *Muṣannaf*, §28889.

⁸⁶ See n. 98, p. 133 below, and the accompanying text.

⁸⁷ Ibn Abī Šaybah, *Muṣannaf*, §29235.

⁸⁸ In his seminal encyclopedia of means of punishment and torture in the history of Islam, 'Abbūd aš-Šālḡī devotes 34 pages for instances of using shaving and plucking out as a means of punishment; see his *Mawsū'at al-ʿaḏāb*, 2nd ed. (Beirut: ad-Dār al-ʿArabiyyah li-l-Mawsū'āt, 1999), 4:17-50.

⁸⁹ On the “divorce of *bid'ah*” and its types, see Ibn Rušd, *Bidāyat al-muḡtahid*, 4:178-180, 183-9, and editor's notes therein.

⁹⁰ 'Abd ar-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, §§10257, 11181-2; Ibn Abī Šaybah, *Muṣannaf*, §§18443, 18445.

as one utterance, or invalid at all; nevertheless, the tendency among Sunnī schools is to accept the validity of the “divorce of *bid‘ah*,” *pace* Zāhirites and Ibn Taymiyyah, while the tendency among Šī‘ites is not to accept it as valid.⁹¹

(28) Appraisal by means of estimation for taxation purposes: This is reportedly considered by aš-Ša‘bī (d. between 103/721 and 110/728) to be a *bid‘ah*.⁹² More on that shortly.

(29) Accepting the testimony of one witness, given his (and it must be “his”) readiness to take the oath: This is declared *bid‘ah* by az-Zuhri (d. 124/742), claiming that the first to accept it was Mu‘āwiyah (r. 41-60/661-80),⁹³ where the norm had been not to accept it unless supported by a second witness. Again, we have conflicting reports on the practice of the prophet and his companions and their followers, but it seems that most would accept it, *pace* scholars of Kūfah (and hence Ḥanafites).⁹⁴ Interestingly, az-Zuhri himself, according to one report, seems to have been satisfied with it in his capacity as a judge.⁹⁵

⁹¹ Ibn Rušd, *Bidāyat al-muḡtahid*, 4:178-180, 183-9, and editor’s notes therein; Abū al-‘Abbās Taqī ad-Dīn ibn Taymiyyah, *Maḡmū‘ al-fatāwā*, ed. ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad b. Qāsim and Muḥammad b. ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad (Medina: Muḡamma‘ al-Malik Fahd li-Ṭibā‘at al-Muḥṣaf aš-Šarīf, 2004), vol. 33.

⁹² ‘Abd ar-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, §7211.

⁹³ Ibn Abī Šaybah, *Muṣannaf*, §23637; cf. Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, *Istiḡkār*, 7:112.

⁹⁴ Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, *Istiḡkār*, 7:110-9.

⁹⁵ Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, *Istiḡkār*, 7:112.

These are all practices, up to my knowledge, which we can adduce evidence of being condemned as *bid'ah* by a scholar or another in the Umayyad era.⁹⁶ Most of them are related to rituals. The last five are different as they relate to matters of interest to judges and government. We will discuss these five cases separately, and then we will discuss the other cases collectively.

As for condemning the *miḥnah* (inquisition) as *bid'ah*, which is attributed to aš-Ša'bī (d. between 103/721 and 110/728) and al-Ḥakam b. 'Utaybah (d. 115/733), we are not aware of inquisitions, in the technical sense of the word, taking place in the first century. There is no unanimous agreement among Sunnī scholars of *ḥadīth* on the trustworthiness of Ḡābir al-Ḡu'fī (d. 128/745-6),⁹⁷ who is said to have narrated this condemnation. He lived in Kūfah during the first wave of inquisitions that took place during Ḥalid al-Qasrī's government of Iraq (ca. 105-120/724-738).⁹⁸ Moreover, he was active politically.⁹⁹ If

⁹⁶ Books devoted to *bida'* contain many other innovative practices that were introduced in the Umayyad era, but even when we can find attestations for early condemnations, there is no evidence that these were based on the mere fact that the given practices were innovative.

⁹⁷ On Ḡābir, see Ḡamāl ad-Dīn al-Mizzī, *Taḥḍīb al-kamāl fī asmā' ar-riḡāl*, ed. Baššār Awwād Ma'rūf (Beirut: Mu'assasat ar-Risālah, 1980), 4:465-72; and Šams ad-Dīn aḍ-Ḍahabī, *Tārīḥ al-Islām wa-wafayāt al-mašāhīr wa-l-a'lām*, 2nd ed., ed. 'Umar 'Abd as-Salām at-Tadmurī (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1993), 3:385-6. For a Šī'ite perspective, see Abū al-Qāsim al-Ḥū'ī, *Mu'ḡam riḡāl al-ḥadīth wa-tafṣīl ṭabaqāt ar-ruwāh*, 5th ed. (Najaf: Mu'assasat al-Imām al-Ḥū'ī al-Islāmiyyah, 1992), 4:336-346.

⁹⁸ On al-Qasrī's suppression of "heretical" movements, see G. R. Hawting, "Khālīd b. 'Abd Allāh al-Qasrī," in *EP*².

⁹⁹ There is an agreement among the sources mentioned in n. 97, p. 133 above, that he was a Šī'ite, with some attributing to him some extreme views. One report (al-Ḥū'ī, *Mu'ḡam*, 4:341) mentions that he had to flee Kūfah for a short period during Ḥiṣām's caliphate (r. 105-125/724-43, which corresponds roughly to

Ġābir was responsible for this condemnation, then we can date it to the first quarter of the second century. It is a quite late date, and the matter should be seen then as merely a diffident extension of *bid'ah* beyond the realm of rituals by someone who had a personal interest in doing so. Moreover, Sufyān at-Tawrī (d. 161/778), who narrated this report from Ġābir, had his own *miḥnah* as well during al-Manṣūr's caliphate (r. 136-58/754-75).¹⁰⁰ Although he is usually considered a trustworthy narrator, G. H. A. Juynboll in modern times makes a strong case against him, accusing him of fabricating *ḥadīths* serving his own case during his *miḥnah*.¹⁰¹

Interestingly, condemning shaving the head as a means of punishment, which is attributed also to aṣ-Ša'bī, came to us also through Ġābir al-Ġu'fī. We do have other reports indicating some contempt for this punishment, but with no reference to being a *bid'ah*.¹⁰² But in one report, we find what could be the rationale for this attribution. It is narrated that 'Abd Allāh b. 'Abbās (d. 68/687-8) was asked about shaving the head as a means of punishment, so he answered: "God has made it a rite (*nusuk*) and a *sunnah* [that is, in

al-Qasrī's period of government), when the caliph sent a letter to Kūfah summoning him, probably for trial. It is said that he had to pretend to be suffering from dementia, and that the governor, assumingly al-Qasrī, wrote back to Hiṣām asking for pardon, which was granted subsequently.

¹⁰⁰ Šams ad-Dīn aḍ-Ḍahabī, *Siyar a'lām an-nubalā'*, 3rd ed., ed. Šu'ayb al-Arna'ūṭ et. al. (Beirut: Mu'assasat ar-Risālah, 1985), 7:244-5; aḍ-Ḍahabī, *Tārīḥ*, 4:14.

¹⁰¹ G. H. A. Juynboll, *Muslim Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 208-13.

¹⁰² 'Abd ar-Razzāq, *Muṣannaḥ*, §17048; Ibn Abī Šaybah, *Muṣannaḥ*, §29231-5.

pilgrimage], while people made it a punishment!”¹⁰³ If we take this as a basis for the condemnation, then the issue seems to fall within the realm of rituals: shaving the head is a *bid‘ah* because it involves a manipulation of a pilgrimage rite.¹⁰⁴

The case of the *bid‘ah* divorce is different. Here we have plenty of evidence to suggest that this name was used quite early. But, because of that, the use of the word *bid‘ah* here seems to reflect the earlier sense of the word as we have reconstructed in chapter two. The judges facing this divorce were puzzled. But the decision of Šurayḥ (d. ca. 78/697) is illuminating. He demanded that the man should declare his intention, and then the judge should act accordingly.¹⁰⁵ It is true that some early scholars, and some later jurists, nullified this method of divorce, or considered it as a merely one utterance of the divorce; nevertheless, the fact that many early scholars, following Šurayḥ, chose to resort to intention

¹⁰³ “*Ġa‘alahu l-Lāhu nusukan wa-sunnatan wa-ġa‘alahu n-nāsu ‘uqūbah;*” Ibn Abī Šaybah, *Muṣannaf*, §29231; also found (with slight variations) in ‘Abd ar-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, §17048; cf. Ibn Abī Šaybah, *Muṣannaf*, §29234. If the report is authentic, Ibn ‘Abbās might have been in fact challenging the authority of Ibn az-Zubayr in Mecca, for the latter seems to have been applying this form of punishment; see Ibn Abī Šaybah, *Muṣannaf*, §29238. Cf. n. 55, p. 125, and n. 72, p. 128 above, and the accompanying texts; and see the discussion towards the end of this section.

¹⁰⁴ Similarly, in Neh 13:25, Nehemiah’s act of pulling out the hair as means of punishment for those who were intermarried can be seen as a manipulation of Israelite mourning rites; nevertheless, as Saul M. Olyan argues, Nehemiah’s actions seem to be regarded justifiable; see Saul M. Olyan, “Two Types of Ritual Innovation for Profit,” in *Ritual Innovation in the Hebrew Bible and Early Judaism*, ed. Nathan MacDonald (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), 18.

¹⁰⁵ As we have seen earlier, early jurists have different opinions on the matter. Resorting to intention seems to be the position of ‘Aṭā’, Sa‘īd b. Ġubayr, Ibrāhīm an-Naḥa‘ī, ‘Umar II, and ‘Amr b. Dīnār, in addition to Šurayḥ; see ‘Abd ar-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, §§11171-98; and Ibn Abī Šaybah, *Muṣannaf*, §§18437-54.

shows that the problematic nature of this divorce lies in its ambiguity, which stems from the fact that it is not in accordance with the established norms, rather than having no precedent. If our understanding is correct, then this practice should be taken out of the list.

The issue of appraisal by means of estimation for taxation purposes is an issue that was controversial in Islamic law. It seems that Medina scholars supported this practice, while Iraqi scholars did not.¹⁰⁶ This might reflect attitudes towards Umayyad policies more than anything else. The use of the word *bid'ah* by aš-Ša'bī (d. between 103/721 and 110/728) as a way of condemnation might reflect an understanding of the term as unprecedented act, or an act that was not done by the prophet. But it seems that aš-Ša'bī is referring here to appraisal for *zakāh* purposes specifically, or at least this is where one can find the discussion of the matter in later law works.¹⁰⁷ In this case, the issue should be regrouped with the other ritualistic practices, and hence does not need to be treated separately.

The final issue is that of accepting the testimony of one witness, given his readiness to take the oath. Most later scholars accepted this testimony, although not in all cases and not without further qualifications.¹⁰⁸ We have seen that az-Zuhrī (d. 124/742) claimed

¹⁰⁶ Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, *Istidkār*, 3:222-5.

¹⁰⁷ See, e.g., in addition to the previous reference, Sayyid Sābiq, *Fiqh as-sunnah*, 3rd ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1977), 1:358-9; Abū Muḥammad 'Alī b. Aḥmad ibn Ḥazm, *al-Muḥallā bi-l-āṭar*, 3rd ed., ed. 'Abd al-Ġaffār Sulaymān al-Bindārī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2003), 4:63; and Ibn Rušd, *Bidāyat al-muḡtahid*, 2:280-3.

¹⁰⁸ Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, *Istidkār*, 7:110-9.

that it is a *bid'ah*, but we have seen also that this did not prevent him, in his capacity as a judge, from accepting such a testimony.¹⁰⁹ As we have seen, it does not seem that az-Zuhri ever used the word *bid'ah* pejoratively. Given also that we have many reports indicating that different companions, in their capacities as judges, accepted such a testimony, it seems that the word *bid'ah* is applied by az-Zuhri to indicate a matter that is left to the judge. In other words, it is a *bid'ah* in the sense that the judge has the right to accept or dismiss by exercising his own judgment (i.e., independently; hence, it is a *bid'ah*). In this case, this issue becomes also outside of the realm of *bid'ah* taken here to mean an unprecedented act.

When it comes to ritualistic practices, we must first rid ourselves of the notion that rituals, by definition, are symbolic acts whose power rests on being accurate imitations of earlier traditional practices. In such a notion, a phrase such as “ritual innovation” would be considered almost as an oxymoron. Ritual innovations do occur. But there are two versions of this assertion: (1) a soft version, where innovations do occur *despite* the very conservative nature of rituals;¹¹⁰ and (2) a hard version, where there is nothing inherently ultra-conservative about rituals, and conscious attempts at innovation are very mildly resisted when undertaken by legitimate religious authorities.¹¹¹ In the first version, there is

¹⁰⁹ See pp. 62, 132 above.

¹¹⁰ This seems to be what Catherine Bell suggests; see her *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 210-2.

¹¹¹ This is what one can understand from describing ritual as “cultural dynamic flow, despite its specific characteristics like formality, standardization, and repetition,” Christiane Brosius and Ute Hüsken, “Change and Stability of Rituals: An Introduction,” in *Ritual Matters: Dynamic Dimensions in Practice*, ed. Christiane Brosius and Ute Hüsken (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), 1.

nothing to explain about the emergence of the condemnation of *bid'ah* as innovation in Islam. This condemnation is inherent in the concept of ritual itself. What need to be explained are the innovations themselves, and how some of them found their ways into orthopraxis. In the second version, however, such condemnation of innovation is not self-explanatory.

It is clear that this writer assumes the hard version. The fact that the number of the issues is quite small, and so is the number of scholars involved in transmitting the narrations, gives more credibility to this claim. It is true that for each and every ritualistic practice that is mentioned in our list, there is, in addition to the very few reports that condemn the practice as a *bid'ah*, a large number of early reports that attempt at regulating or approving the practice, or even disapproving it but on a different account. But it is this very observation that makes us think that the concept of *bid'ah* as an innovation was being slowly cooked. In other words, far from being a collection of reports that aim at identifying authentic traditional practices,¹¹² works such as 'Abd ar-Razzāq's *Muṣannaf* seems to me as a collection that aims at preserving a tradition of innovative opinions, practices, and measures taken by early Muslim religious leadership. Amid these reports, a few appear that attempt at regulating by resorting to previously established practices, without necessarily indicating who established them. In this case, asking why and how the previously established practices became normative would be a legitimate question.

To answer these questions, we will start by making two observations:

¹¹² It goes without saying that the collection itself aims at that. What is being asserted here is that this does not apply to the individual reports within the collection. This distinction is necessary so that we do not follow the common fallacy of ascribing to an early scholar such as 'Aṭā' the mindset of 'Abd ar-Razzāq.

(1) All the reports in our list are coming from Iraq or Mecca. None is coming from Syria nor Medina. This applies even to the narrations quoting ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Umar (d. 73/693) and al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr (d. 107/725-6), where it would be expected to have *sanads* coming from Medina.¹¹³ Even ‘Umar b. Ḥafṣ’s report (practice # 2 above) on the practice of *aḍān* in Medina came to us through a Meccan channel.¹¹⁴

(2) Most of the issues are quite trivial, at least to the external observer. But, many of the later controversies about these issues run following sectarian lines: Sunnī scholars on the one side, and Šī‘ite scholars on the other. We have seen this already in the controversy over *tarāwīḥ* prayer. We can see it here in practices ##2, 7, 9, 14, 16, and 20. It is true, however, that most other issues are agreed upon by later scholars.

What should we make out of this?

¹¹³ We have two Meccan narrations quoting Ibn ‘Umar (‘Abd ar-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, §§1832, 8983), and two Iraqi narrations (Ibn Abī Šaybah, *Muṣannaf*, §§7859, 7866). We do have one Syrian *aḥad* (with two different numbers: Ibn Abī Šaybah, *Muṣannaf*, §§5479, 5483) narrated by Hišām b. al-Ġāz, but this Hišām is a much later figure who worked as a treasurer for al-Manšūr, the ‘Abbāsīd caliph, so strictly speaking it cannot be counted as a purely Syrian narration. In this Hišām, see aḍ-Ḍahabī, *Siyar*, 7:60. As for al-Qāsim’s condemnation, it came to us through an Iraqi channel; see the chain of transmitters in Ibn Abī Šaybah, *Muṣannaf*, §6781

¹¹⁴ It came to us through Ibn Ġurayḡ of Mecca. Moreover, there seems even to be a confusion in the report that could not be made by any person living in Medina. The report is on the *aḍān* in Medina. There are many people named ‘Umar b. Ḥafṣ, but the two candidates for narrating this *aḥad* are ‘Umar b. Ḥaf b. ‘Umar b. Sa’d b. ‘Ā’id, and ‘Umar b. Ḥaf b. ‘Umar b. Sa’d b. Mālīk. The difference is in the name of the third grandfather. It is more probable that the former would be the one reporting on the *aḍān* in Medina, given that his first grandfather was the professional *mu’aḍḍin* of the city. Nevertheless, the report is on the practice of the second grandfather of the latter, who was not known to be a *mu’aḍḍin* during the reign of ‘Umar as the report assumes. It seems that the two personalities were conflated. On the two ‘Umars see, al-Mizzī, *Tahḍīb*, 21:302-4.

This small set of ritual practices that are deemed *bid'ah* is only a small subset of a larger set of ritual practices that came to be used as identity markers for the sects that were under formation in early Islam. Such a larger set would include: wiping the upper feet in ablution vs. washing the whole feet, wiping one's shoes in replacement of washing the feet, etc. This explains to us how *bid'ah*, being an unprecedented act, is connected to *bid'ah*, being an act that does not conform to community norms, that is, to the conception of *bid'ah* that was starting to develop in Iraq, as we have seen in the previous chapter. As a matter of fact, most the texts that we can adduce in support of attributing the epithet *bid'ah* to the ritual practices under investigation do not say much about why they were called as such. But, in some we have a clearly diachronic conception: for example, we have the practice # 8, where the text that we can adduce bases the condemnation on the mere fact that it was considered, at the time, a new practice that had not been practiced by earlier generations of Muslims. On the other hand, we have practice # 4, where the text that can be adduced clearly refers to the then (and now) common practice as normative, indicating a more synchronic conception of *bid'ah*.

A plausible explanation of the emergence of this diachronic aspect of *bid'ah* is that the conception of *bid'ah* that emerged in Iraq, and that was understood as adopting an act or a practice independently from the community practices and norms in the context of Ibn al-Aṣ'at rebellion (ca. 81-3/700-2), had to retreat after the latter's defeat. Instead of being employed against political authorities, it became a useful tool utilized by different factions within the community to differentiate others. But in its retreat, it carried with it the domain in which it was applied at first; that is, it was applied first in the domain of rituals (postponing the prayer's time), and it continued now to be applied in the same domain.

But these different factions occupied the same social space, which made it necessary for any accusation of *bid'ah* to take a diachronic dimension. In other words, since all these communities under formation were still living together in one larger community, it should have been impossible to differentiate between what would be a community practice and what would be a *bid'ah* without resorting to some point in the past. *Bid'ah* is still a practice that does not adhere to community norms, but these are understood now as those norms received from previous generations.

This does not set aside the political dimension of *bid'ah*. We have seen that in Ibn al-Aṣṭaṭ rebellion, the community was perceived as one entity facing the political authorities. Practice # 5 above, although appears to be quite trivial, seems to be brought into attention to discredit Muṣ'ab b. az-Zubayr (d. 72/691) during his rule over Kūfah. But what seems new in most of the practices under investigation is their deceptively apolitical appearance. This is because the political activism of the day started to take the shape of rereading the political history of Islam in religious terms. When people condemn gatherings conducted by *quṣṣās* ([piety-inducing] storytellers), they seem to be condemning the Umayyad practice initiated by Mu'āwiyah (r. 41-60/661-80).¹¹⁵ When the addition in the morning call for

¹¹⁵ "Story-tellers" is only an approximation, since *qaṣṣ* is not restricted to that genre. *Quṣṣās* appeared from a quite early day, but Mu'āwiyah seems to be the one who deserves to be credited (or discredited) for institutionalizing the activity of *qaṣṣ* and making it a profession. See Khalil Athamina, "Al-Qasas: Its Emergence, Religious Origin and Its Socio-Political Impact on Early Muslim Society," *Studia Islamica* 76(1992): 53-74. For another perspective, see Lyall R. Armstrong, *The Quṣṣas of Early Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 2016). Armstrong's treatment, however, suffers from several methodological problems, the most important of which is treating any instance of *qaṣṣ* (story-telling, but specifically using this verb or verbal noun) in the sources as an instance of *qāṣṣ* (story-teller, using the active participle), which did not allow him to differentiate between professional *quṣṣās* and others who employed *qaṣṣ* in their discourses. See Pamela Klasova, Review of *The Quṣṣas of Early Islam*, by Lyall R. Armstrong, *Al-Uṣūr al-Wuṣṭā* 25(2017): 190-6.

prayer is attributed to ‘Umar’s era (13-23/634-644), the condemnation appears to be applied not only to the practice, but also to ‘Umar himself. But, this religious reading of early Islamic polity, with its obsession with such trivial matters, at least for the external observer, seems to be a characteristic of the process of identity formation in early Islam. In other words, *bid‘ah* started to reside in identity politics.

It is not surprising that Medina and Damascus were not involved in any of this. Damascus was the Umayyad’s capital since the time of Mu‘āwiyah. As for Medina, although it showed a strong resistance to the Umayyads during the reign of Yazīd I (r. 60-64/680-683) and during Ibn az-Zubayr’s caliphate (64-73/683-692), the Marwānids managed later to establish a strong relation with its religious elite.¹¹⁶ Innovations made by political

¹¹⁶ In his recent work, Steven C. Judd questions the piety-minded opposition paradigm that seems to be adopted by many modern scholars in studying the scholarly activities of early Islam. He does that by studying the biographies of five “piety-minded” scholars who collaborated with the Marwānids in articulating Islamic doctrines and legal verdicts. The five scholars are the Kūfan aṭ-Ṭawrī and aṣ-Ṣa‘bī, the Syrian al-Awzā‘ī, the Basran ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Awn, and the Medinan az-Zuhrī. Judd’s case is strong, but for our purposes the list is not balanced. While both az-Zuhrī and al-Awzā‘ī almost monopolized the religious scholarship in their respective cities during their lifetimes, this is definitely not the case with the other three. In other words, by showing the affinity between az-Zuhrī and al-Awzā‘ī on the one side, and the Umayyads on the other, one could conclude an affinity between Medinan and Syrian scholars and the Marwānids; a conclusion that cannot be maintained for other cities. See, Steven C. Judd, *Religious Scholars and the Umayyads: Piety-Minded Supporters of the Marwānid Caliphate* (New York: Routledge, 2014). Of course, the Šī‘ite *imāms* (as-Saḡḡād, al-Bāqir, and aṣ-Ṣādiq), who lived in Medina, were quite exceptional in this regard, but their influence seems to be mainly in Kūfah where most of their followers lived.

authorities, even in the domain of rituals, were faced by little resistance, if ever, and some managed to become part of the orthopraxis.¹¹⁷

But the role of Mecca is interesting. Mecca was the seat of the earliest school in exegesis, that is, the school of Ibn ‘Abbās (d. 68/687-8) and his followers. Consequently, a distinctive school of law started to appear.¹¹⁸ But the school of Ibn ‘Abbās was not without rivals in the city. When the failed caliph Ibn az-Zubayr proclaimed himself *amīru l-mu’minīn* in 64/683, Ibn ‘Abbās refused to give his allegiance to him. This caused a strong tension between the two, and Ibn ‘Abbās had to leave Mecca.¹¹⁹ The assumption that Ibn az-Zubayr left no legacy in Mecca after he was killed by al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ’s army in 73/692 seems to be over simplistic.¹²⁰ It is true that the followers of Ibn ‘Abbās had the upper hand in defining the

¹¹⁷ We have seen an example of this in the previous chapter in the Mālikite position on the issue of postponing the prayer time; see pp. 90ff. above. Moreover, in n. 19, p. 119 above, and the accompanying text, we can see that the Umayyads were not shy from using force to impose respect for their religious authority.

¹¹⁸ On this distinctive school, see Harald Motzki, *The Origins of Islamic Jurisprudence: Meccan Fiqh before the Classical Schools*, tr. Marion H. Katz (Leiden: Brill, 2002). Motzki argues forcefully against Schacht’s assumption that Ibn Abbās was merely the eponym of the Meccan jurists. He shows how the Meccan school developed in a continuity from the early days of Ibn ‘Abbās to the times of aṣ-Ṣāfi‘ī.

¹¹⁹ L. Veccia Vaglieri, “Abd Allāh b. al-‘Abbās,” in *EI*².

¹²⁰ Motzki seems to overlook this when he thinks that ‘Aṭā’ (the Meccan scholar), when he had to resort to both Ibn ‘Abbās and Ibn az-Zubayr to back his challenged opinion, could not have made this up, because at that time (presumably the beginning of the 2nd/8th century) Ibn az-Zubayr’s opinion did not matter anymore. The truth of the matter is that the person who challenged ‘Aṭā’ was Syrian (Sulaymān b. Mūsā), and ‘Aṭā’ needed to appear as representing the consensus of Meccan jurists. Resorting to Ibn az-Zubayr cannot be adduced here in support of the credibility of ‘Aṭā’ (although I *do* think he is credible); rather, it shows the continuity of Ibn az-Zubayr’s legacy. Cf. Motzki, *Origins*, 118; and ‘Abd ar-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, §11772.

religiosity of Mecca in the years following the death of Ibn az-Zubayr, but they had to assume this position by defaming Ibn az-Zubayr in a very subtle way. The same subtlety can be found in the Zubayrid counterattack.¹²¹ In this context, *bid'ah* started to appear as a powerful weapon.¹²² Understanding it as acting independently from the common norms would not be enough given that the context is one of competition over defining these norms. Temporality was needed, in the same manner in which it was needed in Iraq.¹²³

¹²¹ Given the nature of the collections such as 'Abd ar-Razzāq's *Muṣannaf*, where each report appears independently, this subtlety might be overlooked. Take for example the report §12192 in the *Muṣannaf*, where Ibn Ḡurayḡ (a follower of Ibn 'Abbas's school) reports a certain opinion of Ibn az-Zubayr that contradicts the opinion of 'Uṭmān. Treated independently, one might think that this report indicates Ibn Ḡurayḡ's endorsement. But a few reports later (§12199) we can see what seems to be the true opinion of Ibn Ḡurayḡ and his teacher 'Aṭā', which endorses the opinion of 'Uṭmān.

¹²² See n. 55, p. 125, n. 72, p. 128, and n. 103, p. 135 above, and the texts accompanying these notes.

¹²³ It seems, however, that there is a slight difference. Were Ibn 'Abbās and Ibn az-Zubayr when they were allegedly accusing each other of committing *bid'ah* referring necessarily to deviating from the prophet's practice, or were they alluding to practices established in pre-Islamic Mecca? This applies especially to practices related to pilgrimage such as practice # 20 in our list. The section on pilgrimage rites (*kitābu l-manāsik*) in 'Abd ar-Razzāq's *Muṣannaf* (vols. 4-5) is full of reports on disagreements between the two schools in matters related to *ḥaḡḡ* and the sanctuary. But we might find answers to our question if we investigate somewhere else. The clear affinity between the school of Macca (as represented, e.g., by Ibn Ḡurayḡ) and the Šī'ites (as represented by aṣ-Šādiq) seems to have escaped modern scholars. The two schools developed independently, but they claim to be stemming from the verdicts and teachings of two Hāšimites. I believe that by unearthing this affinity, we might find some answers to questions pertaining to the origins of Islamic law.

II. The Emergence of Temporal Bid'ah in Theology

The Umayyad era witnessed the appearance (and sometimes the disappearance) of several Islamic factions, some of which started from an early period developing distinctive theologies. Many of the ideas that were formulated in that period received further articulation in the early 'Abbāsid era and took their places within sectarian orthodoxies that started to be formed. Within sectarian cultural wars in the 'Abbāsid era, many of these ideas were condemned for being *bid'ahs*, understood here as opinions not being held by earlier Muslims, by those who do not hold them, and hence the holders of those ideas were considered “people of *bid'ahs*” (*ahlu l-bida'*) by representatives of other sects. In many cases, as one can see in biographical dictionaries, accusations of *bid'ah* were undertaken retrospectively to target people and groups from the early period of Islam.

Nevertheless, one searches in vain to find attestations for such condemnations in theological matters that can be dated, with minimum amount of scrutiny, to the Umayyad era. But there is one major exception, that is, the issue of free will, or as it is called in Arabic, the issue of *qadar*. But before embarking on a careful examination of this issue as it pertains to *bid'ah*, we will have first to clear the space by taking a close look into the only two instances that I was able to find which contain what might seem at first early attestations of condemnation of Murğī'ah and Ḥawārīg for holding opinions that were deemed as *bid'ah*.

It is reported that when Ibrāhīm an-Naḥā'ī (d. ca. 96/717) was asked about how one should reply when asked whether she is a believer or not, he replied that by accepting

the question and attempting at answering one would be conducting a *bid'ah*.¹²⁴ This issue is related to the claim made by Murgī'ah (including Abū Ḥanīfah) and later by Māturīdīs that faith or belief (*īmān*) is something discrete that does not increase or decrease. In the history of Islamic law, Ḥanafites usually depict themselves to be a continuation of an-Naḥa'ī's school.¹²⁵ In this case, attributing this position, which apparently does not conform to Abū Ḥanīfah's claims on the nature of belief, to an-Naḥa'ī could be seen as an attempt at discrediting Abū Ḥanīfah or undermining his position by resorting to the great master.¹²⁶

But this does not have to be the case. *Irğā'* went in different phases, and the position attributed to Abū Ḥanīfah seems to be a late articulation of its doctrinal tenets, an articulation that appeared sometime in the first quarter of the second century.¹²⁷ An-Naḥa'ī's position here might reflect the earlier stage of *irğā'*, rather than reflecting the opponents' position, especially that it is reported that he added, "I would not be pleased if you doubt [your belief status]."¹²⁸ It seems that what worries an-Naḥa'ī is not the nature

¹²⁴ Ibn Abī Šaybah, *Muṣannaf*, §31049.

¹²⁵ See Benham Sadeghi, "The Authenticity of Two 2nd/8th Century Ḥanafī Legal Texts: the *Kitāb al-āthār* and *al-Muwaṭṭa'* of Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Shaybānī," *Islamic Law and Society* 17(2010): 294-5.

¹²⁶ It is important to note that the report appears in Ibn Abī Šaybah's *Muṣannaf*, which contains a long chapter of a collection of reports entitled "The book on refuting Abū Ḥanīfah" (*Kitābu r-raddi 'alā Abī Ḥanīfah*); See Ibn Abī Šaybah's *Muṣannaf*, 20:53-217.

¹²⁷ Saleh Said Agha, "A Viewpoint of the Murji'a in the Umayyad Period: Evolution Through Application," *Journal of Islamic studies* 8(1997): 36-8.

¹²⁸ "*Wa-mā yasurrunī in šakakt*," Ibn Abī Šaybah, *Muṣannaf*, §31049.

of belief, which is the issue that worries later theologians, but its implication: one is guaranteed paradise if she is a believer, so claiming to be a believer amounts to claiming a share in the world to come, as Ibn Mas‘ūd reportedly suggested.¹²⁹ In other reports, an-Naḥa‘ī provides us with two possible answers that would avoid running into this conclusion: you might answer by saying “I hope so” (*arġū*),¹³⁰ or by saying, “Indeed, I do believe in God, His angels, His books, and His prophets.”¹³¹

Having said that, the condemnation that is implied in an-Naḥa‘ī’s reply, if authenticated, seems to be of moral value rather than being of theological significance. Answering such a question would be inappropriate, given the fact that it amounts to feeling protected from accountability on the Day of Judgment. Although *bid‘ah* here would mean, most probably, an unprecedented act, it cannot be used as an attestation of theological condemnation, but rather of one analogous to the ritualistic condemnations of the previous section.

As for early condemnations of Ḥawāriġ for being *mubtadi‘ah*, we have only one instance. It is reported that al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728) said:

The prophet (peace be upon him) fought the Arabs among the people of this island [i.e., Arab peninsula] to accept Islam, and he did not accept from them anything else. This was

¹²⁹ This is what can be understood from Ibn Mas‘ūd’s response to the issue as reported by an-Naḥa‘ī himself; Ibn Abī Šaybah, *Muṣannaf*, §31011.

¹³⁰ Ibn Abī Šaybah, *Muṣannaf*, §31012. One must remember that *irġā’*, etymologically, can be derived from <*r ġ w*> or from <*r ġ ’*>. It has the sense of hope if derived from the first, and the sense of postponement if derived from the second.

¹³¹ “*Āmannā bi-l-Lāhi wa-malā’ikatihi wa-kutubihī wa-rusulihī*,” Ibn Abī Šaybah, *Muṣannaf*, §31018.

the best *ġihād*. Then there was another *ġihād* by [fighting] this band among the people of the Book... Everything else is a *bid'ah* and error.¹³²

Although al-Ḥasan seems to be targeting Ḥawāriġ with these words, the accusation with *bid'ah* has little to do with their doctrinal dogmas. It has more to do with forming a militant group that aims at fighting other Muslims. The use of *bid'ah* in this context seems to accord with the meaning we assigned to it in the previous chapter. The temporality, suggested by the reference to the prophet's practice, does not seem to be intended. The contrast is between a *ġihād* conducted by the prophet and by the community of believers, and a war targeting this very community. The first is the *sunnah*; the other is the *bid'ah*.

So, we are left with the issue of free will, or *qadar*. Here we have plenty of evidence of early condemnations of the idea. Many of those who showed contempt for the idea stated “being a *bid'ah*” as one of the factors for condemnation. We read, for example, that Abū Idrīs al-Ḥawlānī (d. 80/699) said:

Indeed, hearing that there is a burning fire around the mosque is preferable for me to hearing of a *bid'ah* without anyone changing it. Verily, Abū Ġamīl¹³³ does not believe in predestination (*qadar*), so do not sit with him.¹³⁴

¹³² “Qātala rasūlu l-Lāhi šalla l-Lāhu ‘alay-hi wa-sallama ahla hādīhi l-ġazīrati mina l-‘arabi ‘ala l-islāmi wa-lam yaqbal min-hum ġayrahū wa-kāna afḍala l-ġihādi wa-kāna ba‘dahū ġihādun āḥaru ‘alā hādīhi t-ṭuġmati fī ahli l-kitāb... mā siwāhumā bid’atun wa-ḍalālah;” Ibn Abī Šaybah, *Muṣannaf*, §33301.

¹³³ All what is known about this Abū Ġamīl is that he used to reject predestination. According to one report, he had to flee Damascus to Ḥimş after this statement by Abū Idrīs; Šihāb ad-Dīn ibn Ḥaġar al-‘Asqalānī, *Lisān “al-Mizān,”* ed. ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ġuddah (Beirut: Dār al-Bašā’ir al-Islāmiyyah, 2002), 9:40.

¹³⁴ “La-an asma’a fī nāhiyati l-masġidi bi-nārīn tuḥriqu aḥabbu ilayya min an asma’a bi-bid’atin laysa la-hā muġayyirun alā inna Abā Ġamīlin lā yu’minu bi-l-qadari fa-lā tuġālisūh;” Abū Bakr Ġa’far al-Firyābī, *K. al-Qadar*, ed. ‘Abd Allāh b. Ḥamad al-Manşūr (Riyadh: Aḍwā’ as-Salaf, 1997), §447. Can be found also, with

Believing in predestination seems to be the official doctrine that was preached in Syria under the Umayyads.¹³⁵ On the other hand, denying predestination seems to have been preached mainly in Iraq, and especially in Basra.¹³⁶ You can find condemnations of denying predestination coming from everywhere, but basing this condemnation on being an innovation seems to be peculiarly Syrian, as it is in this report.

We do have, however, one instance, if authenticated, of what seems to be a condemnation of affirming predestination on the basis that such an affirmation is a bid'ah. I am referring here to the famous letter that is attributed to al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728) in which he argues against predestination, in response to a letter that he received from 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān (r. 65-86/685-705), in which the latter asked him to clarify his position. The position of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī on the matter has been always a matter of controversy. This can be explained by the fact that al-Ḥasan enjoyed a very good reputation in Basra during his lifetime and afterwards. It is not surprising then to see different parties

variations, in Muḥammad ibn Waḍḍāḥ al-Qurṭubī, *Al-Bida' wa-n-nahy 'an-hā*, ed. 'Amr 'Abd al-Mun'im Salīm (Cairo: Maktabat Ibn Taymiyyah, AH 1416), §§87-8; 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Baṭṭāh al-'Ukbarī, *Al-Ibānah 'an šarī'at al-firqaḥ an-nāḡiyah wa-muḡānabat al-firaq al-maḍmūmah*, 2nd ed. for vols. 1, 2, and 5, and 1st ed. for other volumes, ed. Riḍā Mu'ṭī et al. (Riyadh: Dār ar-Rāyah, 1994-2005), §599; and Muḥammad b. Naṣr al-Mrwazī, *as-Sunnah*, ed. Sālim Aḥmad as-Salafī (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Kutub at-Taḡāfiyyah, 1988), §99.

¹³⁵ 'Alī Sāmī an-Naššār, *Naš'at al-fikr al-falsafī fī al-Islām*, 9th ed. (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1995), 1:232. Nevertheless, the doctrine received a great momentum towards the end of the Umayyad period when it was used forcefully by Ḡāhm b. Šafwān (d. 128/746) in Ḥurāsān, but against the Umayyads this time; see Agha, "Viewpoint," 23-5, 36-8.

¹³⁶ Aḥmad Amīn, *Faḡr al-Islām: Yabḥaṭ 'an al-ḥayāh al-'aqliyyah fī šadr al-Islām ilā āḥir ad-dawlah al-umawīyyah*, 10th ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1969), 286.

trying to claim him to their causes. In this case, the letter might be seen as such an attempt by later Mu‘tazilites.¹³⁷ Nevertheless, there are strong indications that al-Ḥasan had in fact opinions on predestination not far from those found in the letter.¹³⁸ What is of interest to us here is the following passage in which al-Ḥasan seems to be defending himself against accusations of *iḥdāt* (understood here as innovations):¹³⁹

No one among previous generations used to deny that [i.e., free will], or argue about it, for they were all holding to one straight [opinion]. We only initiated (*aḥdatnā*) talking about it when people started (*aḥdata*) denying it. When the modifiers (*muḥditūn*) of their religion altered (*aḥdatū*) what they have altered, those sticking to [God]’s Book invented (*aḥdata*) what by which they can refute the modifications (*muḥdatāt*) and warn against perils.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ The authenticity of the letter has been controversial among modern scholars. Helmut Ritter endorsed its authenticity. So did Joseph Van Ess initially, but he later revised his position. Gautier Juynboll, although he raised some questions concerning al-Ḥasan’s authorship, he accepted an early date towards the end of first century. Michael Cook placed the epistle in the late Umayyad period, and thus rejected al-Ḥasan’s authorship. But for our purposes, all these opinions endorse an early authorship. On the other hand, John Wansbrough argued that the epistle could not have been written before late 2nd/8th century. An excellent review of literature which summarizes the arguments made by each of these scholars, among others, can be found in Suleiman Ali Mourad, *Early Islam between Myth and History: al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110H/728CE) and the Formation of His Legacy in Classical Islamic Scholarship* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 189-193. Mourad, on his part, argues forcefully for a much later date (late 4th/10th century); *ibid.*, 194-239. Nevertheless, I do not believe that the final word has been said yet.

¹³⁸ See Mourad, *Early Islam*, 161-175.

¹³⁹ The word *ibtada‘a* does appear in some versions of the epistle (see the different versions of the epistle as edited in Mourad, *Early Islam*, 284-302). Nevertheless, its appearance is of a much lesser significance than the passage we are quoting and can be interpreted easily as “acting or holding opinion independently.”

¹⁴⁰ “*Wal-lam yakun fi s-salafi man yunkiru ḍālīka wa-lā yuḡādilu fī-hi li-anna-hum kānū ‘alā amrin wāḥidin muttasiqin wa-inna-mā aḥdatna l-kalāma fīhi ḥayṭu aḥdata n-nāsu n-nukrata la-hū fa-lammā aḥdata l-*

Having all these different translations for one term in this short paragraph is necessary to capture al-Ḥasan's argument. Three defensive strategies are employed in this paragraph: (1) shifting the burden of proof: while the accusation of *iḥdāt* rests on the claim that there is no precedent for affirming the free will, al-Ḥasan takes this affirmation axiomatically, demanding a precedent for denying the free will; (2) distinguishing between *iḥdāt* as initiation, and *iḥdāt* as modification of an established doctrine; only the latter is to be condemned; and (3) accusing the opponents of committing *iḥdāt*: this is a logical corollary of (1) and (2).

Surely, the epistle's authenticity is far from being established. But assuming its authenticity, it does not add much to our understanding of *bid'ah*. The epistle presumes that the opponents' accusations against Qadariyyah of being *mubtadi'ah* rests on their understanding of *bid'ah* as initiation. But if this is the case, then their fault is not different from the fault of those who invented the ritual practices discussed in the previous section. In other words, Qadariyyah's *bid'ah*, according to the opponents, is that they spoke or argued about these matters, and not that they believed in what they believed in.¹⁴¹ Thus,

muḥdītūna fī dīnīhim mā aḥdātūhu aḥdāta l-mutamassikūna bi-kitābihi mā yubṭilūna bi-hi l-muḥdātati wa-yuḥaddirūna bi-hi mina l-muhlikāt;" al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, as quoted in 'Abd al-Ġabbār b. Aḥmad al-Hamaḍānī. K. *Faḍl al-i'tizāl wa-ṭabaqāt al-mu'tazilah wa-mubāyanatihim li-sā'ir al-muḥālifīn*, in *Faḍl al-i'tizāl wa-ṭabaqāt al-mu'tazilah*, by Abū al-Qāsim al-Balḥī, al-Qāḍī 'Abd al-Ġabbār, and al-Ḥākim al-Ġiṣūmī, ed. Fu'ād as-Sayyid (Tunis: ad-Dār at-Tūnusiyyah li-n-Našr, 1974), 216. Cf. the critical apparatus in Mourad, *Early Islam*, 285.

¹⁴¹ This might be in fact the position of many "traditionalists" in the early period, if we were to project into them the image of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal as portrayed sarcastically by al-Ġāḥiẓ, where he appears to be a person who is unwilling to affirm or negate any proposition, even when a very strict syllogistic reasoning is applied to premises that he is willingly ready to accept; see Abū 'Uṭmān al-Ġāḥiẓ, *Rasā'il al-Ġāḥiẓ*, ed. 'Abd as-Salām Hārūn (Cairo: Maktabat al-Ḥānḡī, 1964-1979), 3: 292-4.

bid'ah remains outside the realm of doctrines. If authentic, or early, the significance of the letter then is that it shows that the conception of *bid'ah* that was emerging in Iraq and Mecca as established in the previous section did not go without resistance.

As for the writer of the epistle, adopting the conception of *bid'ah* as alteration or modification of established doctrines would amount to something if by “established doctrines” we mean those established by a certain worldly mandate, not if we mean those established by God in the Qur'ān. But it is the latter sense that is intended. In this case, the fault into which one falls when adopting opinions that contradict the Qur'ān has more to do with running against the Qur'ānic truth than with being merely unprecedented. This is why the author, in the rest of the epistle, applies several hermeneutic techniques to show that his doctrine is the one that is in full accordance with the teachings of the Qur'ān.

More instructive for our purposes is the famous epistle attributed to 'Umar II (r. 99-101/717-720), which he reportedly sent to a group of Qadariyyah. This is by far the most significant piece of evidence that we have for a condemnation based on the innovative nature of denying predestination. In this letter, 'Umar argues using rational and scriptural evidence in support of a mild version of predestination. The letter is long, so I will excerpt here the most relevant parts for our discussion:

[1] You know that the people of *sunnah* used to say: “Holding fast to *sunnah* [leads] to salvation. Knowledge will be taken away¹⁴² in a fast manner.” Moreover, 'Umar b. al-Ḥaṭṭāb said while admonishing people: “Nobody can be justified after [receiving] the clear evidence

¹⁴² Joseph van Ess reads *wa-sa-yanqas/wa-sa-yunqas* (will decrease/will be decreased) for *wa-sayuqbad*; cf. his *Anfänge muslimischer Theologie. Zwei antiqadaritische Traktate aus dem ersten Jahrhundert der Hīġra* (Beirut & Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1977), 43 (of the Arabic section).

for undertaking an error thinking it is right, nor for leaving a right thing thinking it is an error. Matters have been clarified; demonstration have been established; [the possibility of] excusing (*‘udr*) has been cut off.” Whoever has a distaste for the prophetic communiqués, and for what the Book has come up with, the ropes of guidance will be cut off from his hands, and he will not find a shelter that would protect him from destruction.¹⁴³

...

[2] The Book of God lays down the demolition of your *bid‘ah*, and [shows] the excess of your false accusations.¹⁴⁴

...

[3] Your *imāms*, who are the people of *sunnah*, have said: “The good deed is from God by [His] preordainment,¹⁴⁵ while the bad deed is from ourselves [but known to God] by [His] Foreknowledge.¹⁴⁶

...

[4] Moreover, the prophet has said: “... Do not call the people of monotheism infidels, and do not accuse them of polytheism...” ... [What you did in response is that] you leveled¹⁴⁷

¹⁴³ “*Wa-qad ‘alimtum anna ahla s-sunnah kānū yaqūlūna li-‘tišāmu bi-s-sunnati nağātun wa-sayūqbaḍu l-‘ilmu qabḍan sarī‘an wa-qawlu ‘Umara bni l-Ḥaṭṭābi wa-huwa ya‘īzu n-nāsa inna-hū lā ‘udra li-aḥadin ‘inda l-Lāhi ba‘da l-bayyinati bi-ḍalālatin ḥasibahā hudan wa-lā fī hudan tarakahū ḥasibahū ḍalālatan qad tabayyanati l-umūru wa-ṭabātati l-ḥuğğatu wa-nqaṭa‘a l-‘udru fa-man rağiba ‘an anba‘i n-nubuwwati wa-mā ġā‘a bi-hi l-kitābu taqaṭṭa‘at min yaday-hi asbābu l-hudā wa-lam yağid la-hū ‘iṣmatan yangū bi-hā mina r-radā;” Abū Nu‘aym Aḥmad al-Isbahānī, *Ḥilyat al-awliyā’ wa-ṭabaqāt al-aṣfiyā’* (Cairo: Maṭba‘at as-Sa‘ādah, 1974), 5:346; cf. van Ess, *Anfänge*, 43 (of the Arabic section).*

¹⁴⁴ “*Kitābu l-Lāhi qā’imun bi-naqḍi biḍ‘atikum wa-ifrāṭ qadfikum;”* Abū Nu‘aym, *Ḥilyah*, 5:348; cf. van Ess, *Anfänge*, 46 (of the Arabic section).

¹⁴⁵ Reading *qadar* for *‘ilm*, following van Ess, *Anfänge*, 51 (of the Arabic section).

¹⁴⁶ “*Qāla a’immatukum wa-hum ahlu s-sunnati l-ḥasanatu mina l-Lāhi fī [qadarin] qad sabaqa wa-s-sayyi’atu min anfusinā fī ‘ilmin qad sabaq;”* Abū Nu‘aym, *Ḥilyah*, 5:351; cf. van Ess, *Anfänge*, 51 (of the Arabic section).

¹⁴⁷ Reading *ğarradtum* for *maqadtum*, following van Ess, *Anfänge*, 54 (of the Arabic section).

your testimony at your people (*ummah*) [by accusing them] of disbelief, and you disavowed them by your *bid'ah*.¹⁴⁸

The authenticity of the letter is disputed among modern scholars, and the disputation is far from being settled.¹⁴⁹ The conception of *bid'ah* in the context of the epistle might in fact contribute to the ongoing discussion on its authenticity. In [4] the author clearly accuses those denying predestination of committing a *bid'ah*. But why is it so? If one takes the Iraqi understanding of *bid'ah* as established in the previous chapter, then one could say that denying predestination is a *bid'ah* because it is assumingly against the belief of the great mass (*as-sawādu l-a'zam*). If one takes the Syrian understanding, then one could say it is because denying predestination runs against doctrines established and preached by political authorities in Damascus. If one takes the later medieval understanding of *bid'ah* as innovation, then denying predestination is a *bid'ah* because it assumingly runs against beliefs established by (prophetic) tradition. To which conception of *bid'ah* is the author referring? What is striking about this letter is that its author seems to be referring to these three ideas

¹⁴⁸ “*Tumma qawlu rasūli l-Lāh... ahlu t-tawhīdi lā tukaffirūhum wa-lā taṣḥadū ‘alay-him bi-širk... [ḡarradum] šahādatakum ‘alā ummatikum bi-l-kufri wa-bari’tum min-hum bi-bid’atikum;*” Abū Nu’aym, *Ḥilyah*, 5:353; cf. van Ess, van Ess, *Anfänge*, 54 (of the Arabic section).

¹⁴⁹ Joseph van Ess has initially advocated the authenticity of the text; see his *Anfänge*, 113-176. Michael Cook is more skeptic. But he suggests an early date for the text, which started to be attributed to ‘Umar by the end of 2nd century, with additional tempering taking place later; see his *Early Muslim Dogma: A Source-Critical Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 124-136. Van Ess, on his part, seems to be still more inclined to accept its authenticity, but seems now to be ready to accept the possibility of later interpolations; see his *Theology and Society in the Second and Third Centuries of the Hijra: A History of Religious Thought in Early Islam*, tr. John O’Kane and Gwendolin Goldbloom (Leiden: Brill, 2017-8), 155-6.

simultaneously. In [4], he accuses Qadariyyah of setting themselves against the *ummah* through their *bid'ah*. In [3], he declares that Qadariyyah are adopting ideas not supported by *imāms*, who should be understood here as simultaneously the political and religious leaders. By declaring that the *imāms* are the people of *sunnah*, the author in fact is saying that Qadariyyah are committing *bid'ah* for not following their *imāms*. Finally, in [1], there is a clear appeal to tradition.

To understand the conception of *bid'ah* involved in this epistle, one must step back to investigate the developments in the Syrian political conception of *bid'ah* for which 'Umar II is said to be responsible.

When it comes to a personality like 'Umar II, it is difficult to separate myth from reality, given the halo of sacredness that was bestowed on him in later sources. One of the earliest sources on his biography is *Sīrat 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz* by the Egyptian scholar Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam (d. 257/871).¹⁵⁰ Nothing in this biography is unbelievable. But this does not make it authentic. What makes this biography valuable, however, is that it depends exclusively on Egyptian and Medinan sources, of whom Mālik b. Anas (d. 179/795) stands at their center.¹⁵¹ The depicted image undoubtedly has some basis in 'Umar's deeds and sayings, but, more importantly for our purposes, it depends also on the picture that the earlier generation of these piety-minded scholars of Medina (and Egypt by extension) wanted to draw, not of 'Umar per se, but of the righteous caliph at the conceptual level.

¹⁵⁰ Abū Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *Sīrat 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz 'alā mā rawāhu al-imām Mālik b. Anas wa-aṣḥābuh*, 6th ed., ed. Aḥmad 'Ubayd (Beirut: 'Ālam al-Kutub, 1984).

¹⁵¹ See the *sanad* in Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *Sīrat 'Umar*, 23.

The *sīrah* seems to be a manual on the rightly guided government and on conflict resolution. This probably explains the extensive correspondence found in it, so extensive that Patricia Crone and Martin Hinds commented sarcastically by saying that the correspondence “even granted that ‘Umar II may have interfered with everybody’s business on an unusual scale.”¹⁵²

The main problem that these Medinan scholars (and probably ‘Umar II) aimed at solving is the problem of the relationship between the governor and the governed. We have seen that this relation was seen in diametrically opposite ways in Syria and Iraq. The Medinan scholars aimed at a middle ground. Both the governor and the governed have to adhere to principles beyond both of them. They must adhere to tradition. But the Medinan solution is Syrian at heart; for by tradition they meant that of the earlier caliphs (“Your *imāms*, who are the people of *sunnah*”). So, what is the difference between this paradigm and that implied in the *ḥadīth* of al-‘Irbāḍ b. Sāriyah discussed in the previous chapter?¹⁵³ The innovation made by these scholars (and probably by ‘Umar himself) is to consider this tradition as binding to the caliph himself. In one of his alleged speeches, ‘Umar reportedly said:

The prophet, peace be upon him, and those who were in charge after him, have sanctioned (*sanna*) norms (*sunan*). Holding to them is holding to the Book of God. Moreover, they strengthen one [to do the duties] of His religion. No one has the right to exchange them

¹⁵² Patricia Crone and Martin Hinds, *God’s Caliph: Religious Authority in the First Centuries of Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 77.

¹⁵³ See pp. 67ff. above.

[with something else] or modify them or [even] consider anything that would conflict with them.¹⁵⁴

Although this speech still accepts the role of *imāms* in creating the *sunnah*, it does not give them the right to alter or modify existing or established *sunnah*. In other words, the *sunnah* is binding, but the *imām* may sanction new *sunnahs* in new situations, as can be understood by ‘Umar’s inaugural letter:

As for new matters that occur to which the *imāms* are exposed, and on which there is no clear verdict in the Book of God nor in the *sunnah* of His prophet, peace be upon him, no one should put herself before the one who is in charge of Muslims and [who is] the *imām* of their commoners (*imāmu ‘āmmati l-muslimīn*). No attempt at making verdicts on these issues should be made without his [consultation]. Those who are beneath him should file the matter to him and submit to his judgment.¹⁵⁵

The hierarchy is quite clear. But the *imām* is now perceived as “the *imām* of the Muslim commoners” (*imāmu ‘āmmati l-muslimīn*). He is the creator of the tradition and the keeper of it at the same time.¹⁵⁶ The use of *sunnah* to refer exclusively to the prophet should not

¹⁵⁴ “Sanna rasūlu l-Lāh šalla l-Lāhu ‘aly-hi wa-sallama wa-wulātu l-amri min ba’dihī sunanani l-aḥḍu biha ‘tiṣāmun bi-kitābi l-Lāhi wa-quwwatun ‘alā dīni l-Lāhi wa-laysa li-aḥadin tabdīluhā wa-lā taḡyīruhā wa-la n-naẓaru fī amrin ḥālafahā;” Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam, *Sīrat ‘Umar*, 40. Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam comments that he heard Mālik saying, “I liked ‘Umar’s determination in this matter.”

¹⁵⁵ “Wa-ammā mā ḥadaṭa minā l-umūri l-latī tubtala l-a’immatu bi-hā min-mā lam yuḥkimhu l-Qur’ānu wa-lā sunnatu n-nabiyyi šalla l-Lāhu ‘aly-hi wa-sallama fa-inna wālī amri l-muslimīna wa-imāma ‘āmmatihim lā yuqaddamu fī-hā bayna yadayhi wa-lā yuqḍā fihā dūnahū wa-‘alā man dūnahū raf’u ḍālīka ilay-hi wa-t-taslimu li-mā qaḍā;” Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam, *Sīrat ‘Umar*, 68-9.

¹⁵⁶ See also p. 169 below.

mislead us. In the same letter, ‘Umar makes it clear that he accepts the authority of those *imāms* who preceded him (*mā salafa ‘alayhi amru l-a’immah*).¹⁵⁷

As we have said, we are not proposing here the authenticity of all the letters and speeches found in Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam’s *Sīrat ‘Umar*. Nevertheless, they are composed with a very strong sensibility to the facts of the Umayyad polity, facts that are not necessarily shared by the ‘Abbāsīd polity. Whoever responsible for them was reflecting an understanding that must have occurred in the first quarter of the second century.¹⁵⁸

This brings us back to ‘Umar’s letter to the Qadariyyah. The writer of this letter seems to share the same understanding of *bid‘ah* that can be found in Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam’s *Sīrat ‘Umar*: (1) *bid‘ah* is adopting an idea not supported by the *imām*; (2) but this *imām* is the *imām* of the Muslim commoners; thus, *bid‘ah* is setting oneself against the *ummah*; (3) and the *imām* and the *ummah* are followers of the tradition of the earlier *imāms*; thus, *bid‘ah* is adopting an opinion that runs against the tradition. Having said that, it is more likely that the epistle under consideration is indeed Umayyad, although one cannot be certain whether it is rightly attributed to ‘Umar or not.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam, *Sīrat ‘Umar*, 69.

¹⁵⁸ This is not to say that they are necessarily the product of that period. They might be later reflecting a view alternative to the ‘Abbāsīds that originated sometime earlier but cherished within some circles.

¹⁵⁹ Even the *ḥadīṭ* towards the end of the letter, which might be an interpolation (van Ess, *Theology*, 1:56), reflects an Umayyad sensibility: combining *ḡihād* behind any *imām*, not accusing any Muslim of disbelief, and believing in predestination together (Abū Nu‘aym, *Ḥilyah*, 5:353) cannot be the work of the ‘Abbāsīd period. There is another letter on the same theme attributed to ‘Umar II. It is reported that ‘Adī b. Arṭa’ah (d. 102/720), the governor of Basra, sent ‘Umar a letter asking for instructions on the best way to

Bid'ah in Syria and Medina is still in the realm of politics. So how did it come to the domain of theology? The fact that *bid'ah* is being used only in referring to denying predestination or affirming free will should alert us. The political ideal of Syria is still that of complete obedience. Any theological system that would give agency to people might threaten this political ideal. On the one hand, it would make the rulers be perceived as free agents, and this would make the demand of obedience to them less appealing, since they are prone to error. On the other hand, if God has created people free, how would the demand for absolute obedience be justifiable? Thus, predestination in the natural order of things corresponds to coercion in the world of man. It follows that if *bid'ah* is still understood as disobedience, although the element of temporality is now being accounted for, then denying predestination would be the metaphysical equivalence of *bid'ah*.

In the previous chapter, we have shown how the *bid'ah-sunnah* dichotomy came into being. In this chapter, we have shown how *bid'ah* started to acquire an element of temporality. This took place first in Iraq and Mecca in the last third of the first century, where different

deal with the Qadariyyah in his city. In his alleged response, a more elaborate theory of *bid'ah* emerges, which does not fit our discussion here; see Abū Nu'aym, *Ḥilyah*, 5:338; Ibn Waḍḍāḥ, *Bida'*, §74; Ibn Baṭṭāḥ, *Ibānah*, §1833; and Abū Bakr Muḥammad al-Āğurrī, *K. aṣ-Ṣarī'ah*, ed. 'Abd Allāh b. 'Umar b. Sulaymān ad-Dumayğī (Riyadh: Dār al-Waṭan, 1997), §529. Nevertheless, there are several reasons to doubt the authenticity of this letter, the most important of which is that a very similar letter, albeit much longer, is attributed to al-Māğisūn 'Abd al-'Azīz b. 'Abd Allāh (d. 164/780), which seems more likely to be his; see Ibn Baṭṭāḥ, *Ibānah*, §1855; Muwaffaq ad-Dīn ibn Qudāmah al-Maqdisī, *Damm at-Ta'wīl*, ed. Badr b. 'Abd Allāh al-Badr (Kuwait: ad-Dār as-Salafiyyah, AH 1406), §67.

religious-political groups sharing the same social space started to create their own ritualistic identity markers. Since all these groups shared the notion of *bid'ah* as deviation from the common practice, the common practice had to be redefined in terms of received tradition to account for differences and to discredit the practice of other factions. *Bid'ah* then started to acquire a diachronic sense; it is now defined as deviation from the common practice in rituals *as defined by the tradition*.

In Syria and Medina, the conception of *bid'ah* as deviation from the political authorities continued to be valid. But in their attempt at consolidating the different factions within the Islamic community, the Median scholars (and 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz) found a middle ground between the Iraqis and the Syrian. They resorted to tradition as a reference point for both the governed and the governor, but by tradition they meant the tradition received and established by the previous caliphs. In this new ideal, both the governed and the governor are now bound by the same principles, and it is the job of the caliph to maintain this received tradition and develop it. At heart, their synthesis remains Syrian for it does not give any agency to the political subjects: their job is to obey.

But this mandate political ideal has a corresponding theological ideal. Agency is thought of as being restricted metaphysically to correspond to its restriction at the political level. This might explain why it is that among all theological problems that appeared in the Umayyad era, it was only the specific doctrine of free will that was deemed *bid'ah*.

Nevertheless, the most important development in the history of *bid'ah* took place in the domain of jurisprudence. Although this development gave *bid'ah* its final definition, and made it a central conception in Islam, it also planted the seeds for its demise and

dispensability, except as a rhetorical figure of speech. This, however, would be the topic of our next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE EMERGENCE OF TEMPORAL *BID'AH* IN JURISPRUDENCE

In the previous chapter, we have seen how *bid'ah* started to acquire a temporal sense in the fields of rituals and theology. In that sense, *bid'ah* started to be seen as religious innovation that is contrasted to *sunnah*. In this chapter, we will see how it became understood in contrast to the *sunnah* of the prophet exclusively. Furthermore, I will argue that the development of this conception of *bid'ah* was essential in crystallizing the main doctrines of aš-Šāfi'ī (d. 204/820), which soon later came to be accepted universally.

I. Sunnah v. Ḥadīth

Most scholars would agree that the modern study of early Islamic law has been dominated for the last seventy years by theories and arguments advanced by Joseph Schacht in his seminal *Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence*.¹ This is not to say that those theories and arguments were left unchallenged, or even refuted in certain aspects. It rather means that that book has defined the parameters of the field and identified its main concerns and questions.

¹ Joseph Schacht, *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1950).

Although the word *bid'ah* does appear in Schacht's *Origin*,² it does not seem to concern him much. He is more concerned with understanding the term *sunnah*, and with identifying three stands of *sunnah* that were running in parallel during the Umayyad era: the pre-Islamic customs of Arabia, the administrative policies in the different regions, and the "living traditions" of law schools in the *amṣār*. According to Schacht, it was only with aṣ-Šāfi'ī that *sunnah* came to be unified by confining it to the *sunnah* of the prophet, and, by doing so, aṣ-Šāfi'ī provided Islamic legal thought with a theoretical basis that came eventually to be accepted universally.³

Schacht's theory involves questioning the authenticity of most prophetic traditions that deal with legal matters. If the *sunnah*, as a legal term, came to be defined as the *sunnah* of the prophet only with aṣ-Šāfi'ī, then it would not make much sense to have a large body of legal prophetic traditions before that time. This insight forced Schacht to enquire into the growth of legal traditions in the second part of his four-part book.⁴ His main conclusion was that most of these traditions were originally sayings and opinions of certain later authorities, and that they were later attributed to the prophet through fabricated chains of transmitters. Schacht claims that, in most cases, the promoter of such a tradition, that is, the one who is responsible for putting the tradition into circulation, is "the (lowest)

² See, e.g., Schacht, *Origins*, 60, where he translates *bid'ah* as "reprehensible innovation." Admittedly, Schacht's translation is to the term as it is used in the writings of aṣ-Šāfi'ī (d. 204/720), and in that context, it seems quite fitting.

³ Schacht, *Origins*, 329.

⁴ Schacht, *Origins*, 138-189.

common link in the several strands of *isnād*.”⁵ This conclusion was challenged later by several scholars. Al-Azami, for example, follows the examples adduced Schacht in support of his arguments one by one, identifying what he considers as errors and misunderstandings on Schacht’s part.⁶ Motzki, on the other hand, starts from ‘Abd ar-Razzāq’s *Muṣannaf*, taken as an example, and identifies his sources. He, then, moves a step higher by identifying the sources of the sources, and so on. In every step, he shows that we can adduce ample evidence to support the claim of authentic attribution.⁷

The authenticity controversy is not going to be settled here. Nevertheless, if we take the following two observations into consideration, the authenticity controversy would seem irrelevant to Schacht’s main thesis:

(1) The existence of a body of traditions attributed to the prophet does not necessarily imply that *sunnah* was confined to the prophetic *sunnah*, nor that the prophetic *sunnah* was considered authoritative in the manner it came to be. What matters really is the way these traditions were used in settling legal matters, rather than the fact (or allegation) that they were in circulation. After all, the legal significance of most of “legal” traditions is not self-evident.⁸ It is only when these traditions were classified in a legal fashion, and

⁵ Schacht, *Origins*, 171.

⁶ M. Mustafa al-Azami, *On Schacht’s “Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence”* (Lahore: Suhail Academy, 2004).

⁷ Harald Motzki, “The *Muṣannaf* of ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-San‘ānī as a Source of Authentic *Aḥādīth* of the First Century A.H.,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 50(1991): 1-21.

⁸ Probably a good exception to this is the category of legal maxims that can be found in prophetic traditions. But the traditions involved are quite small in number. See Schacht, *Origins*, 180-9.

when titles (*tarğamah*) were added to them by authors of *ḥadīṭ* collections that their legal significance can be fully appreciated or even created.⁹ But the first such a work seems to be *al-Muwaṭṭaʾ* of Mālik (d. 179/795).¹⁰ Thus, it is hard to determine, even if we accept that this body of traditions was in circulation from an early period, whether the *sunnah* of the prophet was thought of as binding forever, and whether the prophet, being divinely inspired, was thought of as the sole law-giver. Rather, what this early circulation would indicate is that the prophet's *sunnah* enjoyed a certain level of authority in legal matters, but not that it was thought of as an ever-lasting law that cannot be altered nor that it was necessarily thought of as the ultimate authority.

(2) On the other hand, accepting Schacht's conclusions regarding authenticity does not imply necessarily that prophetic *sunnah* was not considered authoritative in legal matters. Take, for example, the conversation between Mālik (d. 179/795) and Abū Yūsuf

⁹ It is not surprising that Muslim scholars used to say that “al-Buḥārī's *fiqh* [appears] in his titles” (*fiqhu l-Buḥārī fī tarāğimih*); Šihāb ad-Dīn Ibn Ḥağar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Fath al-bārī bi-šarḥ “Šaḥīḥ” al-imām Abī ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl al-Buḥārī*, 3rd ed., ed. Muḥib ad-Dīn al-Ḥaṭīb, ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ibn Bāz, and Muḥammad Fuʿād ʿAbd al-Bāqī (Cairo: al-Maktabah as-Salafiyyah, 1987), 1:13.

¹⁰ The *Mağmūʿ* of Zayd b. ʿAlī (d. 122/740) and the *Musnad* of ar-Rabīʿ b. Ḥabīb (d. ca. 175/791) might be earlier, but their attributions are questionable. Moreover, the arrangement of traditions in the latter is done much later by al-Warğlānī (d. 570/1174-5). On Zayd and his *Mağmūʿ*, see Madelung, *EI*², s.v. “Zayd b. ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn.” As for ar-Rabīʿ, Cook and van Ess propose later dates for his death to account for certain *isnāds* and figures appearing in his *Musnad*; nevertheless, for reasons that go beyond the scope of our discussion here, the whole attribution of the *Musnad* to ar-Rabīʿ is doubtful; cf. Michael Cook, *Early Muslim Dogma: A Source-Critical Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 56, and Joseph van Ess, “Untersuchungen zu einigen ibāḍitischen Handschriften,” *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 126(1976), 25-63.

(d. 182/798), the disciple of Abū Ḥanīfah (d. 150/767), that Abū Muṣ‘ab az-Zuhri (d. 242/857) narrates concerning the practice of *tarḡī* in *adān*,¹¹ which seemingly has no support in *ḥadīth*. Mālik’s answer in support of the practice is revealing:

... The call is done in public five times a day. [Generations] of sons inherited it successively from fathers, from the time of the prophet to this very time. Would you need [a chain of transmitters]? This is sounder to us than *ḥadīth*.¹²

The authenticity of this report may be questioned; moreover, Mālik is quite late in the timeframe within which we are working. Nevertheless, what is significant to us is the fact that it offers a model where the prophetic *sunnah* can still be considered fully authoritative in the absence of *ḥadīth*. In this case, the practice of Medina is thought of as revealing the prophetic *sunnah*, and it gains its authoritative attribute, in Mālik’s (alleged) opinion, from this fact. Mālik, himself, is of course an important figure in the development of *ḥadīth*, although, for Schacht, most of the prophetic traditions included in his *Muwatta’a* should not be attributed to figures beyond those in the generation that preceded him.¹³ But this same Mālik writes to al-Layṭ b. Sa‘d (d. 175/791):

... Then there rose up after [the prophet] those who were put in authority after him and who, of his community, were the ones who followed him most closely. When matters arose

¹¹ See our discussion of this practice on p. 117 above.

¹² “*Yunādā ‘lā ru’ūsī l-aṣḥādī fī kullī yawmin ḥamsa marrātin yatawāratuhu l-abnā’u ‘ani l-ābā’i min ladun rasūli l-Lāhi... ilā zamāninā hādā yuḥtāḡu fīhi ilā fulānin ‘an fulānin hādā aṣaḥḥu ‘indanā minā l-ḥadīth;*” Abū al-Faḍl al-Qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ, *Tartīb al-madārik wa-taqrīb al-masālik li-ma’rifat a’lām madhab Mālik*, 2nd ed., ed. Ibn Tāwīt aṭ-Ṭanḡī, ‘Abd al-Qādir aṣ-Ṣaḥrāwī, Muḥammad b. Šarīfah, and Sa‘id Aḥmad A’rāb (Rabat: Wizārat al-Awqāf, 1983), 2:124.

¹³ Schacht, *Origins*, 149.

about which they had knowledge, they put that knowledge into practice. If they did not have [the requisite] knowledge, they would ask [others] and would go by what they considered to be the most valid opinion according to their own personal reasoning... So, if there is something which is clearly acted upon in Madina, I am not of the opinion that anyone may go against it...¹⁴

Although the letter is meant to establish the living tradition of Medina as universally binding, the fact is it establishes a model that can dispense *completely* with *ḥadīth*, although Mālik himself does not do that, but still consider the prophetic *sunnah* as binding and superior.

Taking these two observations together, it follows that the question of authenticity is irrelevant, or not as relevant as one would think, to Schacht's main arguments concerning the early development of Islamic law. But this is not the exact irrelevancy that Wael Hallaq would suggest.¹⁵ Hallaq correctly observes that the whole Islamic legal tradition is univocal on considering the authenticity of most prophetic traditions, if we exclude the small category of the *mutawātir ḥadīths*, as merely probable.¹⁶ In a way, the whole later *ʿilm al-uṣūl* is an attempt at answering the epistemological question of how we can establish a binding law if we are to base it on a knowledge that is uncertain. In dismissing the issue of authenticity as irrelevant, Hallaq seems to be suggesting that for the jurists to reach a certain

¹⁴ ʿIyāḍ, *Tartīb*, 42-3; I have followed the translation of Yasin Dutton as found in his *The Origins of Islamic Law: The Qurʾān, the "Muwaṭṭaʾ" and Madinan ʿAmal* (Surrey: Curzon, 1999), 38.

¹⁵ See Wael B. Hallaq, "The Authenticity of Prophetic *Ḥadīth*: A Pseudo-Problem," *Studia Islamica* 89(1999): 75-90.

¹⁶ Hallaq, "The Authenticity," 88-90.

verdict, they had always to weight the *ḥadīṭ* material that they had in possession against other considerations. In that sense, *ḥadīṭ* was never thought of as providing the final say, neither before aṣ-Ṣāfi'ī nor after him. But Hallaq seems to be missing the point. It is one thing to say that a certain principle is a source of law in its own right; but it is another to say that it is binding only because it reveals something about prophetic practice. To appreciate this distinction, let us consider the Medinan practice that we mentioned earlier as an important element for the Mālikites. Muḥammad al-Madanī Būsāq, a professor in Riyadh, needed three volumes to discuss all the legal verdicts that Mālik b. Anas based on Medinan practice,¹⁷ but one still can find that he missed some issues.¹⁸ Ḥassān b. Muḥammad Ḥusayn Falimbān (=Palembang), on his part, collected in one volume many issues on which there are discrepancies between *ḥadīṭ* material and the Medinan practice.¹⁹ It is important here to note that Mālik was aware of the concerned *ḥadīṭs* in most of these cases, as he narrates many of them in his *Muwattaʿ*.²⁰ Nevertheless, he preferred to stick to the Medinan practice. the later Mālikites understood this preference of Medinan practice

¹⁷ See Muḥammad al-Madanī Būsāq, *al-Masā'il al-latī banāhā al-imām Mālik 'alā 'amal ahl al-Madīnah tawṭīqan wa-dīrsah* (Dubai: Dār al-Buḥūt li-d-Dirāsāt al-Islāmiyyah wa-Iḥyā' at-Turāt, 2000).

¹⁸ E.g., he missed the issue of putting the right hand over the left while praying; cf. Yasin Dutton, “*Amal v Ḥadīth* in Islamic Law: The Case of *Sadl al-Yadayn* (Holding One's Hands by One's Sides) when Doing the Prayer,” *Islamic Law and Society* 3 (1996): 13-40.

¹⁹ See Ḥassān b. Muḥammad Ḥusayn Falimbān [= Palembang], *Ḥabar al-wāḥid idā ḥālafa 'amal ahl al-Madīnah dirāsatan wa-taṭbiqā* (Dubai: Dār al-Buḥūt li-d-Dirāsāt al-Islāmiyyah wa-Iḥyā' at-Turāt, 2000).

²⁰ For examples, see Dutton, *Origins*, 46-50.

over *ḥadīṭ*, especially when the *ḥadīṭ* concerned has a single source, as a preference for a certain method of determining the *sunnah* of the prophet over another.²¹ Admittedly, there are certain instances where Mālik's words would suggest something like that. The anecdote on *tarǧīʿ* mentioned earlier serves as a good example. But the letter of Mālik to al-Layṭ b. Saʿd suggests that Mālik thought of the Medinan practice as a source of law in its own right. In that model, *sunnah* can be initiated in Medina after the prophet. Nevertheless, every generation is bound to the *sunnah* received from previous generations, and all cities should follow the laws established in Medina.²² Here, the *sunnah* of the prophet is at the top of the hierarchy, but it is only determined by the living tradition of Medina, which expounds upon it and initiates its own *sunnahs*. When later Muslim scholars worked under the assumption that the authenticity of prophetic traditions cannot be established with certainty, they held, with complete certainty this time, that only God and his prophet, and only in the latter's capacity as a divinely-inspired prophet, have the right to act as law-givers.²³ It is the history of this belief that is being investigated by Schacht; and it is this history that seems to have missed Hallaq when he dismissed authenticity as irrelevant.

If our analysis is right, then Schacht's history of Islamic law in its formative period seems to be harmed little if one is to dismiss his theories on prophetic traditions. But what

²¹ See, e.g., ʿIyāḍ, *Tartīb*, 1:47-59.

²² This reminds us of the speech of ʿUmar II discussed in the previous chapter; see p. 156 above.

²³ See, e.g., Abū Ḥāmid al-Ġazālī, *al-Mustaṣfā min ʿilm al-uṣūl*, ed. Ḥamzah Zuhayr Ḥāfiẓ (Medina: Šarikat al-Madīnah al-Munawwarah li-ṭ-Ṭibāʿah, 1993), 2:2-3, where al-Ġazālī makes it clear that the law-giver is only God, while the prophet is merely narrating God's laws as they were revealed to him.

might seem disturbing in Schacht's account is that it can be understood as allowing for the development of law in a manner that would lack any basis for obligation. In practical terms, there is no way to escape the idea of a living tradition. But the legal practitioners within the early developing legal traditions must have thought of themselves as a continuation of a tradition that bases itself on divine revelation. But Schacht does not seem to be making such a claim. It is quite possible to accept Schacht's framework without being completely dismissive to the prophetic *sunnah*. The latter can be seen as the legitimizing basis for the living tradition. Admittedly, the role that one would expect it to have played in establishing rituals must have been much more important than its role in establishing other domains of law.²⁴

According to Schacht, it was aš-Šāfi'ī who articulated the classical theory of Islamic law, especially in its reliance on the prophetic tradition as the main (if not the only) source of legislation. But Schacht understood the work of aš-Šāfi'ī as an articulation of certain ideas and prejudices that were circulating among a growing class of traditionists. It is this specific idea that I will be challenging in what follows, by examining the development of the conception of *bid'ah*.

II. Bid'ah as Ra'y

We have mentioned earlier that there are two *ḥadīths* that have a quite different conception

²⁴ This is not to say that pre-Islamic practices did not play any role in establishing certain rituals. Pilgrimage is a good example of that. Ibn az-Zubayr and Ibn 'Abbās controversies over some pilgrimage practices that were discussed in the preceding chapter (see n. 72, p. 128 above) might reflect controversies over pre-Islamic practices.

of *bid'ah*.²⁵ As we shall see, these *ḥadīths* came to define *bid'ah* in the manner it was understood in later discourses. More importantly, the other *ḥadīths*, such as al-Irbād's,²⁶ came to be understood through these two *ḥadīths*.

The first is the *ḥadīth* of Ḡābir b. 'Abd Allāh al-Anṣārī (d. 78/698). It is narrated that Ḡābir said:

In his sermon, the Messenger of God, peace be upon him, used to praise God as He deserves to be praised, then he would say: "Whomsoever God guides, none can lead him astray, and whomsoever God sends astray, none can guide. The truest of word is the Book of God and best of guidance is the guidance of Muḥammad. The worst of things are those that are *muḥḍatāt*; every *muḥḍatah* is a *bid'ah* and every *bid'ah* is going astray, and every going astray is in Hell." Then he said: "The Hour and I have been sent like these two" [referring seemingly to his two fingers as it is stated in other versions]. Whenever he mentioned the Hour, his cheeks would turn red, and he would raise his voice and become angry, as if he were warning of an approaching army, and would say: "[An army is coming to attack you] in the morning, or in the evening!" Then he said: "Whoever leaves behind wealth, it is for his family, and whoever leaves behind a debt or dependents, then these are my responsibility, and I am the most entitled to take care of the believers."²⁷

²⁵ See p. 93 above.

²⁶ See p. 67 above.

²⁷ "Kāna rasūlu l-Lāhi ṣalla l-Lāhu 'alay-hi wa-sallama yaqūlu fī ḥuṭbatihī yaḥmadu l-Lāha wa-yuṭnī 'alay-hi bi-mā huwa aḥluhū ṭumma yaqūlu man yahdihi l-Lāhu fa-lā muḍilla la-hū wa-man yuḍlilhu fa-lā ḥādiya la-hū inna aṣḍaqa l-ḥadīthi kitābu l-Lāhi wa-aḥsana l-hadyi hadyu Muḥammadin wa-ṣarra l-umūri muḥḍatātuhā wa-kulla muḥḍatatin biḍ'atun wa-kulla biḍ'atin ḍalālātun wa-kulla ḍalālatin fī n-nāri ṭumma yaqūlu bu'ittu ana wa-s-sā'ati ka-hāṭayni wa-kāna idā ḍakara s-sā'ata ḥmarrat waḡnatāhu wa-'alā ṣawtuhū wa-štadda ḡaḍabuhū ka'anna-hū naḍīru ḡaysin yaqūlu ṣabbahākum massākum ṭumma qāla man taraka mālan fa-li-ahlihī wa-man taraka daynan aw ḍiyā'an fa-ilayya aw 'alayya wa-ana awlā bi-l-mu'minin;" Abū 'Abd ar-Raḥmān an-Nasā'ī, *Sunan an-Nasā'ī*, commentated upon by Ḡalāl ad-Dīn as-Suyūṭī, and Muḥammad as-Sindī (Cairo: al-Maktabah at-Tiḡāriyyah, 1930), 3:188. The *ḥadīth* appears also with variations in 'Abd ar-Razzāq b. Hammām aṣ-Ṣan'ānī, *al-Muṣannaḡ*,

The *ḥadīṭ* is narrated by Ġaʿfar aṣ-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765), on the authority of his father, Muḥammad al-Bāqir (d. 117/733), who reportedly narrated it from Ġābir b. ʿAbd Allāh. There are at least nine narrators who claim to have heard Ġaʿfar narrating this *ḥadīṭ*, and these were responsible of disseminating this *ḥadīṭ* in Kūfah, Basra, and Medina.²⁸

I will argue in what follows that the part on *bidʿah* is meant to be an introduction by aṣ-Ṣādiq himself to the report he is narrating rather than being part of the report. In other words, this part should be attributed to aṣ-Ṣādiq himself. At first this seems to be unlikely given the fact that we have nine narrators narrating this *ḥadīṭ* from aṣ-Ṣādiq and agreeing that he attributed these words to the prophet. But if all the narrators were narrating the *ḥadīṭ* from the same setting, then their number becomes irrelevant. In other words, if this report encompasses an incident of conflation or misunderstanding, it would be still one incident whether one narrator narrates it or nine, given that all of them are narrating from the same setting. But, how can we tell that it is one setting? The report is said to be describing the way the prophet used to give his sermons. It has four elements:

2nd ed., ed. Ḥabīb ar-Raḥmān al-Aʿzamī (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1983), §15262; Abū Bakr ibn Abī Ṣaybah, *al-Muṣannaḥ*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAwwāmah (Jeddah: Dār al-Qiblah, and Damascus: Muʿassasat ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān, 2006), §26376; Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad al-imām Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal*, ed. Abū al-Maʿāṭi an-Nūrī et al. (Beirut: ʿĀlam al-Kutub, 1998), §§14386, 14484, 14684, 15047; Muslim b. al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ al-Quṣayrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, ed. Muḥammad Fuʾād ʿAbd al-Bāqī (Cairo: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Kutub al-ʿArabiyyah, 1955-6), §§1960-2; Muḥammad ibn Māǧah al-Qazwīnī, *as-Sunan*, ed. Šuʿayb al-Arnāʾuṭ (Damascus: Dār ar-Risālah al-ʿĀlamiyyah, 2009), §§45, 2416; Abū Dāwūd Sulaymān b. al-Aṣʿaṭ as-Siǧistānī, *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, ed. Šuʿayb al-Arnāʾuṭ and Muḥammad Kāmil Qurrah Balilī (Beirut: Dār ar-Risālah al-ʿĀlamiyyah, 2009), §2954; and an-Nasāʾī, *Sunan*, 3:58.

²⁸ The number is taken by collating the different *isnāds* used in the sources mentioned in the previous note.

(1) the introductory part on *bid'ah*; (2) the part on the Day of Judgment; (3) the part on the physical description of the prophet while preaching; (4) and a final part on a specific legal issue concerning unfulfilled debts in case of death. The last part is clearly not a part of the answer to the enquiry on the prophetic method of speech; it is rather given as a specimen of prophetic oratory. The fact that our narrators agree on narrating this part indicates that it is more likely that they all were present in the same dictating session.

Moreover, there is a disagreement in the sources on the order of these four elements. Thus, in some sources we have them in the following order: 1, 3, 2, 4;²⁹ and in some: 3, 2, 1, 4.³⁰ This instability indicates that the four parts were quite distinctive, joined together by elements of physical gestures and verbal connectors, some of which were preserved in some of the reports by using the phrase, “and then he said” (*tumma qāla/yaqūlu*) and its sort. This makes it easy for an interpolation to pass unnoticed.

But our argument for an interpolation has a more profound basis. In Šī'ite sources, which are naturally quite attentive to aṣ-Ṣādiq's *ḥadīṡs* and sayings, the same *ḥadīṡ* is available with the same four elements, and with the same attribution to the prophet.³¹ Nevertheless, we have also the part on *bid'ah* narrated separately in at least three sources with three different *isnāds*, but attributed this time to aṣ-Ṣādiq and his father, without

²⁹ See, e.g., Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, §14386.

³⁰ See, e.g., Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, §§1960-1.

³¹ See, e.g., Abū 'Abd Allāh aṣ-Ṣayḥ al-Mufid, *al-Amālī*, ed. 'Alī Akbar al-Ġifārī (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Ġadīd and Dār al-Murtaḍā, n.d.), 187-8, 211-2; and Abū Ġa'far aṭ-Ṭūsī, *K. al-Amālī*, ed. Bahrād al-Ġa'fārī and 'Alī Akbar al-Ġifārī (Tehran: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiyyah, 2002), 347.

further attribution to the prophet.³² What seems more likely is that these words on *bid'ah* were uttered by aṣ-Ṣādiq on different occasions. When aṣ-Ṣādiq was asked about the prophet's way of preaching he offered an answer by referring to the *ḥadīṭ* of Ġābir, but he, in the middle of his answer, interpolated the statement that the best guidance is that of the prophet, urging his audience to follow his example.

In all cases, aṣ-Ṣādiq was the one responsible for disseminating this *ḥadīṭ*. Judging from the dates of some of the narrators, this must have taken place in the second quarter of the second century, that is, after the 'Abbāsīd revolution.³³

The other *ḥadīṭ* is that of Abū al-Aḥwaṣ who reportedly narrated that 'Abd Allāh b. Mas'ūd (d. 32/653) said,

Verily there are two and only two things: guidance, and words. The best words are those of God, and the best of guidance is that of Muḥammad, peace be upon him. Beware of forbidden things and *bida'*, for the worst of things are those that are *muḥḍatāt*, and every *muḥḍatah* is going astray.³⁴

³² See Abū Ġa'far Aḥmad al-Barqī, *K. al-Maḥāsīn*, ed. Ġalāl as-Dīn al-Ḥusaynī (Tehran: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiyyah, 1952), 1:207; Muḥammad b. Ya'qūb al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, 3rd ed. (Qom: Dār al-Ḥadīṭ, AH 1434), 1:56 (reference is to the page numbers on the margins); and Ibn Bābawayh aṣ-Ṣadūq, *Tawāb al-a'māl wa-'iḳāb al-a'māl*, ed. 'Alī Akbar al-Ġifārī (Tehran: Maktabat aṣ-Ṣadūq, n.d.), 307.

³³ The fact that this *ḥadīṭ* enjoyed that number of narrators points out to this direction also. Many narrators were quite hesitant to publicly narrate anything from aṣ-Ṣādiq during Umayyad era. A good illustration of that is the fact that Mālik b. Anas (d. 179/795) did not narrate explicitly from aṣ-Ṣādiq, although he was among his teachers, until the fall of the Umayyads; see Šams ad-Dīn aḍ-Ḍahabī, *Siyar a'lām an-nubalā'*, 3rd ed., ed. Šu'ayb al-Arna'ūṭ et. al. (Beirut: Mu'assasat ar-Risālah, 1985), 6:256.

³⁴ “Inna-mā huma tnatāni l-hadyu wa-l-kalāmu fa-aḥsanu l-kalāmi kalāmu l-Lāhi wa-aḥsanu l-hadyi hadyu Muḥammadīn ṣalla l-Lāhu 'alayhi wa-sallama alā iyyākum wa-l-muḥarramāti wa-l-bida'i fa-inna šarra l-umūri muḥḍatātuhā wa-kullu muḥḍatatin ḍalālah;” ‘Abd ar-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, §20076. The *aṭar* can be found

Ibn Mas'ūd then reportedly continued his speech giving advice on several moral issues.

This *aṭar* is narrated by Abū Ishāq as-Sabī'ī (d. 127/745), who is responsible for disseminating it in Kūfah. At least six scholars narrated it from him, two of whom attributed it to the prophet. Ad-Dāraquṭnī (d. 385/995) thinks that the opinion of those who attributed it to Ibn Mas'ūd without claiming that the latter had heard it from the prophet is preferable.³⁵

The similarity between Ibn Mas'ūd's *aṭar* and Ḡābir's *ḥadīth* on the one hand and al-'Irbād's *ḥadīth* that was discussed in chapter three is striking.³⁶ Some versions of Ibn Mas'ūd's *aṭar* are even closer to al-'Irbād's version than the one chosen here. The resemblance suggests a common origin, or that two of the three were modelled after the third.

Nevertheless, it is a deceiving resemblance. Al-'Irbād's *ḥadīth*, as we have seen, contrasted *bid'ah* to *sunnah* to give legitimacy to rulers' decrees, and to demand complete obedience. In Ibn Mas'ūd's *aṭar* and Ḡābir's *ḥadīth*, on the other hand, there is no contrast between *sunnah* and *bid'ah*. They are meant to confine legitimacy to prophetic guidance and only to that. It is only when *sunnah* is understood as solely prophetic that a contrast between *sunnah* and *bid'ah* can be established in these two reports, but at the time of circulation, this was not the case. In other words, it is precisely the *sunnah* of Irbād's *ḥadīth* that is being

also with variations in Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, §§3896, 4022; and Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, §6729. Furthermore, the *aṭar* is attributed to the prophet in Ibn Māğah, *Sunan*, §46.

³⁵ 'Alī b. 'Umar ad-Dāraquṭnī, *al-'Ilal al-wāridah fī al-aḥādīth an-nabawīyyah*, ed. Maḥfūz ar-Raḥmān Zayn Allāh as-Salafī (Riyadh: Dār Ṭībah, 1985), §916.

³⁶ See p. 67 above.

deemed as *bid'ah* in these two reports. The political significance of Ibn Mas'ūd's *aṭar* is noted in one report where the authorities, assumingly al-Walīd b. 'Uqbah (d. 61/680), the governor of Kūfah, demanded that Ibn Mas'ūd should stop uttering these words on *bid'ah*. He reportedly rejected.³⁷ While the authenticity of this report might be questioned, it reflects a certain understanding of the *aṭar* that cannot be harmonized with the way al-'Irbāḍ's *ḥadīṭ* was understood.

In dialectical terms, we might think of the dichotomy in 'Irbāḍ's *ḥadīṭ* as thesis, and that in the *aṭars* of aṣ-Ṣādiq and Ibn Mas'ūd as antithesis. In the process of creating a synthesis, the *sunnah* is now redefined to mean specifically the prophetic law.

But there is more to these two reports. In Šī'ite sources, aṣ-Ṣādiq's condemnation of *bid'ah* appears within a cluster of *ḥadīṭs* devoted to campaigns against *ra'y* (personal legal opinion) and *qiyās* (analogy). For example, the chapter on *bid'ah* in *al-Kāfī* by al-Kulaynī (d. 329/941) is in fact a chapter of sayings of the *imāms*, and especially aṣ-Ṣādiq, that condemn the use of *ra'y* in religious and legal matters.³⁸ The chapter contains twenty-two *ḥadīṭs*. Some of these may be later compositions, but some can be attested in other sources with different *isnāds*, which makes an early attribution more likely. The chapter is entitled “on *bida'*, opinion, and analogies” (*bābu l-bida'i wa-r-ra'yi wa-l-maqāyīs*).³⁹ The concept of *bid'ah* that can be found in these *ḥadīṭs* attributed to aṣ-Ṣādiq and other *imāms* does not

³⁷ 'Abd ar-Razzāq, *Muṣannaḡ*, §4875.

³⁸ Al-Kulaynī, *Kāfī*, 1:54-9.

³⁹ Al-Kulaynī, *Kāfī*, 1:54.

seem at first to be different from that that was adopted by the Syrians, as discussed in chapter three: the *bid'ah* is an act or opinion that conflicts with the *imām*'s will.⁴⁰ But when we look carefully, we find that a further step is taken: *bid'ah* is removed here from the realm of politics to the realm of law. It is used as a synonym to opinion held by jurists, and especially to those based on analogies, hence the title of the al-Kulaynī's chapter.⁴¹

Abū Ishāq as-Sabī'ī, the narrator of Ibn Mas'ūd's *aṭar*, does not seem to be far from this attack on *ra'y*, nor from the Šī'ite circles. Abū Ishāq is the narrator of one of the key texts on attacking *ra'y*: he narrated that 'Alī had said, "Had been religion a matter of opinion, the bottom of the feet would be worthier to be wiped than their upper sides."⁴² As for his

⁴⁰ See pp. 77f. above.

⁴¹ More on this below.

⁴² "*Law kāna d-dīnu bi-r-ra'yi la-kāna bāṭinu l-qadamayni awlā wa-aḥaqqā bi-l-maṣḥi min ḡāhirihimā,*" Ibn Abī Šaybah, *Muṣannaf*, §1907. A complete discussion of this *aṭar* and its *isnāds* can be found in ad-Dāraquṭnī, *Ilal*, §424. It is worth mentioning that despite the many *isnāds* of this *aṭar*, the condemnation of *ra'y* is found only in Abū Ishāq's version. It is important also to note that this *aṭar* might be referring to the practice of wiping the feet, or to the practice of wiping the boots; the first became an important marker of the Šī'ites, while the second became an important marker of the Sunnīs. Nevertheless, we have reports indicating that Abū Ishāq himself used to wipe his boots until al-Bāqir, the fifth Šī'ite *imām*, instructed him not to; see Abū 'Abd Allāh aš-Šayḥ al-Mufīd, *al-Irṣād fī ma'rīfat ḡuḡaḡ Allāh 'alā al-'ibād*, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Mu'assasat Āl al-Bayt, 2008), 2:161.

Šī'ite connections, Abū Ishāq was close to al-Ḥārīt al-A'war (d. 65/684-5), one of the early Šī'ites in Kūfah.⁴³ Moreover, he is explicitly mentioned as a Šī'ite in several sources.⁴⁴

This would not have made a difference if the negative attitude towards *ra'y* was common, or at least shared by different segments of scholars and pious figures in early Islam. But is not this what is assumed when we talk about *aṣḥābu l-ḥadīth* (people of ḥadīth) and *aṣḥābu r-ra'y* (people of opinion) as two distinctive groups in early Islam?

III. Ahlu r-Ra'y and Ahlu l-Ḥadīth

One important contribution of Schacht to our discussion is that he dismissed the common myth about the two early schools of Islamic law: the school of *ḥadīth* in Medina, and the school of *ra'y* (opinion) in Kūfah.⁴⁵ He showed that all early regional schools of law shared similar methodologies, although they differed in their levels of sophistication. The real differences stemmed from different regional practices.

⁴³ On al-Ḥārīt, see aḍ-Ḍahabī, *Siyar*, 4:152-5. It seems that to save the reputation of either al-Ḥārīt or as-Sabī'ī, since much of what as-Sabī'ī narrates from al-Ḥārīt has clear Šī'ite inclinations, there is an insistence that as-Sabī'ī did not hear from al-Ḥārīt except four *ḥadīths*, while the rest of what he narrates from him is through a book that he (i.e., as-Sabī'ī) found; aḍ-Ḍahabī, *Siyar*, 4:153-4.

⁴⁴ See some of these references in 'Abd al-Ḥusayn Šaraf ad-Dīn, *al-Murāğā'āt* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Wafā', n.d.), 100-1. Moreover, his Šī'ite inclinations are clear in his biography as found in aḍ-Ḍahabī, *Siyar*, 5:392-401.

⁴⁵ Schacht, *Origins*, 103-119. For a presentation of the classical view on the existence of two schools of law, see Aḥmad Amīn, *Ḍuḥā al-Islām* (Cairo: al-Hay'ah al-Miṣriyyah al-Āmmah li-l-Kitāb, 1997 [copy of 1933 edition]), 2:151-242.

I am not aware of any scholar after Schacht who disputed this finding, so there is no need here to reinvent the wheel. Nevertheless, I would like to stress here one important implication: all early schools of law, including that of Medina (and especially Mālik's), were schools of legal *ra'y*. The different attitudes towards *ra'y* and *ḥadīth* in legal schools did not follow regional differences, but rather they were consecutive attitudes that could be determined by following the chronological timeline.

That the school of Mālik was originally a school of legal *ra'y* can be shown by the following three observations:

(1) Ibn Qutaybah (d. 276/889), who seems to be among the first people who differentiated between *aṣḥābu r-ra'y* and *aṣḥābu l-ḥadīth*, included Mālik among the people of *ra'y*.⁴⁶ Interestingly, all jurists of Iraq, Syria, and Ḥiğāz were included under this category.⁴⁷ The only person who can be considered a jurist but still fall under the category of *aṣḥābu l-ḥadīth* in Ibn Qutaybah's classification is al-Layṭ b. Sa'd of Egypt.⁴⁸ The classification shows that the term *ra'y* was used almost synonymously with the way the term *fiqh* came to be used.

⁴⁶ Abū Muḥammad ibn Qutaybah, *al-Ma'ārif*, 4th ed., ed. Tarwat 'Ukāṣah (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1981), 494-5.

⁴⁷ Ibn Qutaybah, *Ma'ārif*, 494-500.

⁴⁸ Ibn Qutaybah, *Ma'ārif*, 505-6.

(2) Al-Šāfiʿī's attack against the disciples of Mālik (and sometimes against Mālik himself, or at least his opinions) in his *Umm* stems mainly from them following their opinions rather than traditions.⁴⁹

(3) Most importantly, words and phrases such as *arā* (I think or see), *fī ra'yī* (in my opinion), *uḥibbuh* (I prefer [this opinion]), etc. appear extensively in Mālik's *Muwattaʿ*. In *al-Mudawwanah al-kubrā*, I was able to find more than 2000 instances of using *ara'ayta*,⁵⁰ the phrase that became a label for people of *ra'y* as they would use it to introduce arguments based upon analogy.⁵¹

So, who are then *ahlu/aṣḥābu l-ḥadīth*? The simple answer would be: they are those who were interested in narrating *aḥbār* (anecdotes) including *ḥadīth*. At least this is how the term is used in Ibn Qutaybah's *al-Maʿārif*, the earliest source on the matter. In that sense, the group is only contrasted with *ahlu r-ra'y* in as much as genealogists, Qurʾān reciters, and poetry narrators are, each group of whom has a special section in *al-Maʿārif*.⁵²

⁴⁹ See Muḥammad b. Idrīs aṣ-Šāfiʿī, *al-Umm*, ed. Muḥammad Zuhri an-Naḡḡār (Cairo: Maktabat al-Kulliyāt al-Azhariyyah, 1961), 7:191-7.

⁵⁰ These claims are supported by search using *al-Maktabah aṣ-šāmilah* database (version 3.64). The number may increase exponentially if we allow for derivatives.

⁵¹ *Ahlu r-ra'y* are often labeled by their opponents as *ara'aytiyyūn* ("people who [use the phrase] 'What if' [extensively]"). The discontent with *ara'ayta* can be seen in Abū ʿUmar Yūsuf ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, *Ġāmiʿ bayān al-ʿilm wa-faḍlih*, ed. Abū al-Aṣbāl az-Zuhayrī (Dammam: Dār Ibn al-Ġawzī, 1994), §§2094-97.

⁵² See Ibn Qutaybah, *Maʿārif*, 494-546.

IV. The Campaign Against Ra'y

But if all legal “schools”⁵³ that started to emerge in the beginning of the second Islamic century were schools of *ra'y*, then who lead the campaign against *ra'y*? And why did such a campaign appear to be targeting the Iraqi school specifically? In other words, where did the notion of *ahlu l-ḥadīth* vs. *ahlu r-ra'y* come from? And why did the term *ahlu r-ra'y* become restricted to designate Ḥanafite jurists?

The assumption made in Schacht’s Origin is that the traditionists (*ahlu l-ḥadīth*), or at least a group of them, started to form certain negative attitudes towards the legal schools.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, these attitudes were articulated into a doctrine that formed the basis for a new legal school only with the appearance of aš-Šāfi‘ī.

The reality is that there is no evidence for a campaign against *ra'y* among traditionists before aš-Šāfi‘ī.

Even when we take aš-Šāfi‘ī himself as our starting point, we search in vein for an evidence for such a campaign prior to him. He himself campaigned for two different things: (1) for a redemption of *ḥadīth* from an epistemological perspective; (2) and for confining the *sunnah* to that of the prophet. But these are two different things. Neither of these is related to an alleged quarrel between *ahlu l-ḥadīth* and *ahlu r-ra'y*.

⁵³ The quotation marks are intended here to indicate that “schools” is not used here in its technical sense (*madhabs*). Rather, the word refers here to the different legal activities that were practiced in the different *amṣār* of the Islamic empire.

⁵⁴ Schacht, *Origins*, 253-7.

The fight for the redemption of *ḥadīṭ* is clearly a fight within the legal community; that is, a fight among *ahlu r-ra'y*. But since the validity of the *ḥadīṭ* is what is being debated, it is natural for *ahlu l-ḥadīṭ* to appear, mainly to defend their profession.

As for confining the *sunnah* to that of the prophet, this seems to be responding to (1) claims of authority over matters of legislation by the state,⁵⁵ and (2) applying arbitrary reasoning (*istiḥsān*) by the legal scholars.⁵⁶ These are theological quarrels. We cannot assume a priori that *ahlu l-ḥadīṭ*, being professional narrators, had any opinion on these matters. In other words, that *ahlu r-ra'y* were on one side of the debate does not necessarily imply that *ahlu l-ḥadīṭ* were on the other. We need evidence, and the evidence is lacking.

But we have plenty of evidence that suggests that the campaign against both *ra'y* and the de facto political authorities was an ongoing activity in the Šī'ite circles. We have seen that even in the mainstream Sunnī collections of *ḥadīṭ*, it is only in the Šī'ite circles that we find a conception of *bid'ah* that would equate it to *ra'y*. In their own collections of *ḥadīṭ*, the Šī'ites have more than 160 *aṭars* (the majority of which are attributed to aṣ-Šādiq) devoted to this very idea of refuting legal *ra'y* and equating it to *bid'ah*.⁵⁷ That the Šī'ites would be suspicious, to say the least, when it comes to the use of personal opinion in legal matters should not come to us as a surprise. After all, the whole theory of imamate

⁵⁵ Muḥammad b. Idrīs aṣ-Šāfi'ī, *ar-Risālah*, ed. Aḥmad Muḥammad Šākīr (Cairo: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1938), 79-82.

⁵⁶ Schacht, *Origins*, 121-2.

⁵⁷ Ismā'īl Mu'izzī al-Malāyirī, *Ġāmi' aḥādīṭ aṣ-šī'ah*, 2nd ed., under the supervision of Ḥusayn al-Burūğirdī (Qom: Ismā'īl Mu'izzī al-Malāyirī, AH 1422), 1:368-438.

depends on the assumption that the *imām* is the ultimate authority on all political, religious, and legal matters. Crone and Hinds in their *God's Caliph* argue that such an assumption was the common one among all Muslims in early Islam.⁵⁸ In this case, the Šī'ites, when attacking the use of personal opinion, would be, in fact, trying to preserve, rather than refute, this old assumption. In all cases, even if Crone and Hinds's thesis is not correct, we still have strong evidence that since aṣ-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765) at least, the Šī'ites accepted the ultimate authority of the *imām* as a foundational principle.⁵⁹

Aṣ-Šāfi'ī seems to be holding precisely this Šī'ite conception of *bid'ah*. But while the Šī'ites had this conception linked to their ideas on continuous revelation, aṣ-Šāfi'ī, being Sunnī, rejected categorically the idea of continuous revelation. This means that the same conceptual tool that was used against ra'y and political authorities is used now to confine the *sunnah* to that of the prophet.

But what is the connection between Šī'ites and aṣ-Šāfi'ī? It seems to be Mecca.

Harald Motzki argues rightly that aṣ-Šāfi'ī should be considered the heir of the Meccan legal school, more than any other school.⁶⁰ Motzki's argument is supported by the

⁵⁸ Patricia Crone and Martin Hinds, *God's Caliph: Religious Authority in the First Centuries of Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

⁵⁹ Marshall G.S. Hodgson, "How Did the Early Shi'a become Sectarian?" *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 75 (1955): 1-13.

⁶⁰ Harald Motzki, *The Origins of Islamic Jurisprudence: Meccan Fiqh before the Classical Schools*, tr. Marion H. Katz (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 291-3.

scholarly tradition as well.⁶¹ As a matter of fact, whenever aš-Šāfiʿi mentions *aṣḥābunā* (our associates), the reference seems to be to the Meccans, rather than to the Medinese.⁶²

The Šīʿite connection to the Meccan school is subtler. Al-Bāqir and aš-Šādiq lived in Medina. The later *imāms* lived in Iraq. The Šīʿites were active mainly in Iraq. But when we look at positive law, it is not difficult to notice that the Šīʿite law has strong affinity with Meccan law rather than Iraqi or Medineses.⁶³

Could it be the Hāšimite connection (the House of ʿAlī and the House of al-ʿAbbās)? Aš-Šāfiʿi himself is the grandson of al-Muṭṭalib, the bother of Hāšim.⁶⁴

These are still open questions. But it is quite revealing to read aš-Šāfiʿi saying to an opponent,

⁶¹ See, e.g., Abū ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān an-Nasāʾī, *Tasmiyat fuqahāʾ al-amṣār min aṣḥāb rasūl al-Lāh ṣallā al-Lāh ʿalyhi wa-sallam wa-man baʿda-hum*, ed. Maḥmūd Ibrāhīm Zāyid (Aleppo: Dār al-Waʿy, 1976), 127.

⁶² Cf. Schacht, *Origins*, 9-10, 253, where a claim of Medinese reference is proposed. Nevertheless, Schacht admits that many of aš-Šāfiʿi's severe attacks were directed towards the Medinese school; Schacht, *Origin*, 9.

⁶³ This applies even to matters that came to be considered distinctively Šīʿite, such as those mentioned in Schacht, *Origin*, 263-8.

⁶⁴ We should bear in mind also that the early ʿAbbāsids claimed legitimacy in a similar fashion to the that by which the Imāmiyyah constructed their imamate, albeit through a different line; see ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ad-Dūrī and ʿAbd al-Ġabbār al-Muṭṭalibī, eds., *Aḥbār ad-dawlah al-ʿabbāsiyyah wa-fih aḥbār al-ʿAbbās wa-waladīh* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1971), 165ff.

Our Ḥiğāzī [read: Meccan] associates have testified... that you had abandoned the *sunnah* and *ibtada'tum* what is contrary to it.⁶⁵

But if our analysis is correct, then it would be natural to see the Iraqi school being stigmatized. On the one hand, the Šī'ites were mainly active in Iraq. On the other hand, aš-Šāfi'ī was followed by many traditionists, and most traditionist were active in Iraq.⁶⁶

Once aš-Šāfi'ī established his methodology, the concept of *bid'ah* became irrelevant. The concept was used to establish the authority of the prophetic *sunnah*, but now we have a legal system by which we can deduce from the prophetic *sunnah* legal verdicts for every human action. Innovative actions are no exception; they can assume any of the five legal verdicts.⁶⁷ Nevertheless, dissident voices continued to appear here and there.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ “*Qad šahida ‘alay-ka ašḥābuna l-ḥiğāziyyūna... anna-kum taraktumu s-sunana wa-btada'tum ḥilāfahā;*” Muḥammad b. Idrīs aš-Šāfi'ī, *K. Iḥtilāf al-Ḥadīṭ*, on the margin of *K. al-Umm*, vol. 7 (Cairo: Būlāq, AH 1325), 35.

⁶⁶ It must be noted that the vast majority of those whom Ibn Qutaybah listed under *ašḥābu l-ḥadīṭ* are Iraqis; see Ibn Qutaybah, *Ma'ārif*, 501-527.

⁶⁷ See, e.g., Ibn Ḥağar, *Fatḥ al-Bārī*, 4:253. See also n. 91, p. 52 above.

⁶⁸ See, e.g., Abū al-‘Abbās Taqī ad-Dīn ibn Taymiyyah, *Iqtidā' aš-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm li-muḥālafat ašḥāb al-ğahīm*, 7th ed., ed. Nāṣir ‘Abd al-Karīm al-‘Aql (Beirut: Dār ‘Ālam al-Kutub, 1999), 2:95.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

My study revolved around the concept of *bid'ah* (religious innovation) as it emerged and developed in early Islam. I argued that originally the term *bid'ah* signified the idea of uniqueness and independence and was a value-free concept. Moreover, the element of temporality, essential in the conception of innovation, is absent from this early usage of *bid'ah*. I argued also that it is this early sense that can be attested in the Qur'ān where several derivatives of the root < *b d 'h* > are used. Significantly, there is nothing in that usage that would make the *sunnah-bid'ah* opposition self-evident.

Nevertheless, starting with early Marwānid era, the term started to be conceived negatively. This is evident from several *ḥadīths* that were circulated in that era. But, as I argued, this negative perception did not stem from a change in meaning. The term was still used in the sense of uniqueness and independence. The new perception reflects the contexts in which the term was used. In Syria, the term was used in a context where the “independence” that is signified by the term meant an independence from practices and policies set by political authorities. In Iraq, on the other hand, it meant an independence from those set by the community at large. In both cases, a contrast with *sunnah* was established, reflecting the emergence of two conceptions of *sunnah*. The emerged dichotomies were used to promote an ideology of obedience in Syria and an ideology of rebellion in Iraq.

I argued also that the related term *muḥḍaṭ*, used in association with *bidʿah* in several *ḥadīṭs*, signified originally a conduct that would revoke the status of the conductor. As a political term, as it is used in *ḥadīṭs*, it indicates a crime or a misconduct that would result in revoking the covenant of allegiance. Although the association between *muḥḍaṭah* and *bidʿah* originally meant nothing more than stating that the roots of all crimes can be found in independent acting and reasoning, it left an everlasting impact on the way the two terms were conceived.

Nevertheless, the temporal element was still missing, but its seeds were already planted. All what is needed now is to extend the caliphal (in Syria) or communal (in Iraq) authority back in time. *Bidʿah* started to be seen as acting or reasoning independently from the ways established by earlier political or communal authority.

In Iraq (and Mecca), this corresponds to the failure of revolutionary parties in Iraq (and Ibn az-Zubayr (d. 73/792) in Mecca) in conceding power. *Bidʿah*, once an accusation brought against the Umayyads by revolutionary forces, became a tool that was used among different factions in claiming the true representation of the community. It started to be used in building contesting identities that were developing into sects. But since these factions shared the same social space, a resort to the past was a must. This explains why *bidʿah* in Iraq and Mecca became closely associated with rituals. Rituals are public enough to serve as clear markers that can be used to differentiate communities from one another, and they are private enough not to appear challenging the coercive political authorities.

In Syria (and Medina), the temporal element was brought by the cohesive efforts of the political authorities in the reign of ʿUmar II (r. 99-101/717-720). For the Umayyads, the political demand of obedience was seen as a reflection of a theology of predestination.

Conversely, the belief in free will was conceived as challenging the will of God in a way that might be reflected politically in challenging the will of the earthly sovereign. A theological orthodoxy needed to be established, and to be established it needed to be unchangeable. It is in this context that we should understand the resort to established doctrines. *Bid'ah* started to be understood as thinking in a way that deviates from that established by the received tradition. This development meant that this tradition is binding to the current caliph, as much as his own *sunnah* would be binding to later generations.

Bid'ah is now contrasted with *sunnah*; it has a negative perception; and it signifies innovation. What is still missing is the idea that *sunnah* is confined to the tradition received from the prophet exclusively. I argued that this sense of the word, and of the contrast as well, appeared first in jurisprudence. I argued that regardless of the way Islamic law originated and developed there must have been a sense of divine origin from the beginning; otherwise it would lack any basis for obligation. Nevertheless, following Schacht, jurisprudence developed by the accumulation of opinions of scholars in major cities that created living traditions. The expression *aṣḥābu/ahlu r-ra'y* was used to denote all those scholars engaged in the legal profession. I argued that *bid'ah*, with its negative connotation, started to be used as a synonym to *ra'y* (legal opinion) from an early period, but only by the Šī'ites, who saw in *ra'y* a threat to their developing ideas on the imamate. I further argued that aṣ-Šāfi'ī's *Risālah* should be understood against this background. While the expression *aṣḥābu l-ḥadīṭ* (traditionist) existed before aṣ-Šāfi'ī (d. 204/820), denoting those engaged in transmitting traditions from different sources, it was never contrasted with *aṣḥābu r-ra'y* until aṣ-Šāfi'ī wrote his *Risālah*. In other words, aṣ-Šāfi'ī's ideas on the prophetic *sunnah* were not responding to traditionists but rather to ideas developing in

Šī'ite circles. From that time on, *bid'ah* came to be contrasted with the *sunnah* of the prophet exclusively, but with that, as I argued, it became a dispensable concept.

Islamic Polity

But what does this history of the *sunnah-bid'ah* dichotomy tell us about religiosity in early Islam?

The absence of the dichotomy in early Islam points to a religiosity with no clear boundaries. This should not come as a surprise, for the early manifestations of this religiosity were accompanied by revelation. This means that the world of early Islam was filled with immanence that can be felt in every aspect of life.

This type of religiosity, as Patricia Crone and Martin Hinds have shown,¹ outlived the prophet. The first emergence of the dichotomy in Syria points towards this direction, so does the fact that most early factions, *pace* Ḥārīgites, were centered around charismatic figures, rather than ideals. On the other hand, the emergence of the dichotomy in Iraq seems to be a failure attempt at establishing a community-based religiosity.

The emergence of the temporal element in *bid'ah* points to the move from a religiosity centered around leading figures to one based on tradition. But this seems to be a perturbed state. What would give a certain tradition any sort of legitimacy that would be needed for compulsion?

¹ Patricia Crone and Martin Hinds, *God's Caliph: Religious Authority in the First Centuries of Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

The attack on this idea of tradition seems to have started with the Šī'ites. In a dialectical manner they used the temporal element in *bid'ah*, which gave rise to traditional religiosity, to attack the very notion of tradition. Tradition itself started to be perceived as *bid'ah*. This is the stage when Šī'ites were developing their theories on the imamate, and this attack was meant to support a return to the older versions of religiosity, where the divine is present through (continuous) revelation in one sort or another. The 'Abbāsids, after the revolution, seem to have toyed for some time with these ideas.

But what was meant to promote a return to the older stage of religiosity opened the door for a third stage of religiosity. Aš-Šāfi'ī took the critique of tradition seriously. But since the idea of continuous revelation was discarded categorically, the prophetic *sunnah* became the only source for religiosity. This required developing certain methodologies by which this finite source could be used in infinite number of situations. Religiosity became law-centered.

These three stages correspond to the three types of legitimate authority studied by Max Weber: charismatic authority, traditional authority, and rational-legal authority.² Moreover, the order in which these emerged in early Islam follows the same order suggested by Weber. It is true that an authority that is based on Islamic law and jurisprudence would be classified, strictly speaking, under traditional authority in Weber's scheme, for the rational-legal authority is reserved to the modern type of state. But at the epistemological

² See Reinhard Bendix, *Max Weber: An Intellectual Portrait* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1977), 285-457.

level, there is a discontinuity, and hence no tradition, and the Islamic legal system deals with the prophetic *sunnah* as a body of axioms with which no legal system can dispense.

What is important here is to notice that the correspondence here is between three stages of religiosity and three stages in the development of polities. But seeing Islam as a polity in the first place is nothing new. Was not that the perception of Muslim philosophers from al-Fārābī to Ibn Rušd?

Further Research

The later developments of the conception of *bid'ah* in Sunnī Islam were studied by Nasser Al-Tuwaim in his dissertation on *bid'ah*.³ Similar works on later developments in Šī'ite and Ibādī Islam are still needed. This is especially true given the fact the Šī'ites played a crucial role in molding the conception in the early period as our dissertation suggests.

This dissertation points to a common Meccan/Šī'ite legacy that was crucial in developing the main tenets of Islamic jurisprudence as were outlined later by aš-Šāfi'ī. The links suggested by that should be further investigated. In what follows, I would like to set the horizons of such an investigation. But it must be stressed that some of what will be said in the following lines is still hypothetical.

Schacht has argued that Šī'ite law originated much later than it is generally assumed.⁴ According to him, the legal works attributed to Ġa'far aš-Šādiq (d. 148/765)

³ Nasser I.A. Al-Tuwaim, "The Discussion of the Concept of *Bid'a* from Early Islam up to the Twelfth Century A.H." (PhD Diss., University of Lancaster, 1992). See also our comment on p. 4 above.

⁴ Joseph Schacht, *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1950), 260, 262.

should be thought of as “apocryphal.”⁵ He has rightly pointed to the fact that many of the matters that became distinctive in Šīʿite law were not originally necessarily Šīʿite or Sunnī.⁶ But Schacht seems to have missed that all these distinctive features (of which he mentions only four)⁷ can be traced back to opinions and practices that had some dominance in Mecca if we take the reports in *muṣannafs* into account. The same thing can be said about the links that can be established between Ibāḍī law and the Basran law. Schacht in general pays much more attention to the developments in Syria, Kūfah, and Medina, at the expense of Basra and Mecca, the two cities that are linked together by sharing, genuinely or fictitiously, a legal genealogy that is allegedly traceable to Ibn ʿAbbās (d. 68/687-8) and Ibn az-Zubayr (d. 73/792).⁸

But what Schacht has said about the legal independence of the Šīʿites (and Ibāḍīs for that matter) seems to be right. Motzki’s study on Meccan legal tradition shows that we can have a decent account of that tradition without taking into account the Šīʿites.⁹ But the

⁵ Schacht, *Origins*, 262.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Schacht, *Origins*, 263-8.

⁸ In recent years, Modarressi started examining a common Ibāḍī/Šīʿite legacy; See Hossein Modarressi, “Common Ibāḍī/Shīʿite Legacy: Examples from the Ritual Law,” in *Ibadi Jurisprudence: Origins, Developments and Cases*, ed. Barbara Michalak-Pikulska and Reinhard Eisener (Hildesheim, Zurich, and New York: Olms, 2015), 111-120. He, however, did not point to the possibility that this common legacy has its roots in a common Basran/Meccan one.

⁹ Harald Motzki, *The Origins of Islamic Jurisprudence: Meccan Fiqh before the Classical Schools*, tr. Marion H. Katz (Leiden: Brill, 2002).

legal environment of the Šīʿite law when it became independent was Iraqi. This makes the links between the Šīʿite law and the Meccan legal tradition seem out of order, unless we accept that the Šīʿite legal tradition has a history that can be traceable genuinely to aṣ-Šādiq, not necessarily as a representative of an independent legal school, but rather as one of the representatives of the Meccan school.

The importance of the matter appears when we try to trace the ideas promoted by aṣ-Šāfiʿī (d. 204/820) in his *Risālah*. Aṣ-Šāfiʿī is considered traditionally as the heir of the Meccan school.¹⁰ But his opinions on matters that are distinctive in Meccan law do not support such a claim. If our conclusions in this dissertation are true, then what aṣ-Šāfiʿī inherited from the Meccan school is precisely what made him free from its detailed legal opinions; namely, the principle that considers the prophetic *sunnah* as the only genuine source of law. This principle has not been inherited from traditionalists (*aṣḥābu l-ḥadīth*). Rather, he inherited it from the Meccan school, modified it by removing its Šīʿite taints, and bequeathed to traditionalists.

All of this makes it necessary to have a detailed comparison study between Ġaʿfarī positive law (as represented in the four Šīʿite canonical works) and Meccan positive law (as can be distilled from *muṣannafs*). This should be accompanied by a detailed study of the legal relationship between Basra and Mecca. Once these studies are accomplished, aṣ-Šāfiʿī's *Risālah* might require a new reading.

¹⁰ See, e.g., Abū ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān an-Nasāʾī, *Tasmiyat fuqahāʾ al-amṣār min aṣḥāb rasūl al-Lāh ṣallā al-Lāh ʿalayhi wa-sallam wa-man baʿda-hum*, ed. Maḥmūd Ibrāhīm Zāyid (Aleppo: Dār al-Waʿy, 1976), 127.

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